

*THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* by “William Shakespeare”  
A Contemporary English Version,  
Emended and Rectified, with Notes and Commentary,  
by Jonathan Star

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

DUKE OF VENICE

PRINCE OF MOROCCO (MOROCHO-Q1, MOROCHUS-Q1), *a suitor of Portia*

PRINCE OF ARAGON (ARAGON), *a suitor of Portia*

ANTONIO (ANTHONIO-Q1), *a merchant of Venice, friend of Bassanio*

BASSANIO, *winner of Portia*

LEONARDO, *a servant to Bassanio*

GRATZIANO (GRATIANO-Q1, GRAZIANO), *friend of Bassanio, with Nerissa*

LORENZO (LORENZO), *friend of Gratziano, with Jessica*

SALARINO, *a friend of Antonio* }

SALANIO-Q1 (SOLANIO-Q1), *a friend of Antonio*

SALERIO, *a messenger from Venice*

SHYLOCK (SHYLOCKE-Q1) *a Jewish money-lender*

JESSICA, *daughter of Shylock*

TUBAL (TUBALL-Q1), *a Jewish friend of Shylock*

LAUNCELET -Q1 (LANCELET-Q2, LAUNCELOT, LANCELOT), *a fool, servant of Shylock*

OLD GOBBO (GOBBO), *father to Launcelet*

PORTIA, *an heiress of Belmont*

NERISSA, *her waiting-woman*

BALTHASAR-Q1 (BALTHAZAR), *servant of Portia*

STEPHANO (STEFANO), *servant of Portia*

MESSENGER, *for Portia*

SERVANT (SERVINGMAN), *for Portia*

MAN, *messenger for Antonio*

MESSENGER, *for Jessica*

*Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice,  
a Jailor, Servants and other Attendants*

[See Additional Notes, 0.1.1, for a further discussion on the names]

## **Editions**

### *Editions and Printing Dates:*

First Quarto (Q1), 1600. *The Most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice*.

Second Quarto (Q2), 1619. *The Excellent History of the Merchant of Venice*.

Third Quarto (Q3), 1637. *The Most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice*.

First Folio (F1), 1623; Second Folio (F2), 1632; Third Folio (F3), 1663; Fourth Folio (F4), 1685

## **Punctuation Key**

### *Punctuation Key:*

- a) All line numbering and text references follow *The Merchant of Venice*, Oxford Edition, edited by Jay L. Halio, 1993.
- b) Text found within special brackets { } indicates the original text as found in Q1.
- c) Text found on the right of the body of the play, and the preceded by ‘ / ’ or ‘ // ’ indicates alternative renderings.
- d) Words found within single brackets < > indicate text that was not found in the original yet was added to clarify the original. Words found within double crackets << >> indicate text was added to the original and not indicated nor suggested by the original text.
- e) Text found within open square brackets [ ] was not found in the original but is directly indicated by the original.
- f) Text found within brackets [ ] indicate text that is found in the original but which is suspect.
- g) An arrow ‘ > ’ indicates a commentary on the text

ACT ONE - Scene One (1.1)

*Venice. Enter Antonio, Salarino, and Salanio*

[Added Text, not found in the original]

⟨⟨—Antonio <sup>1</sup>

I know this hatred mocks <sup>o</sup> all Christian virtue	/ hate befouls / hatred fouls
But they I loathe: their very sight abhors me.	
They are <sup>o</sup> but vile infractions of nature,	/ They're none
A plague on all that is righteous and good. <sup>2</sup>	
And the contracts they use to loan their money, <sup>3</sup>	/ they make to ply their loans
Made 'neath the guile of friendship and trust, <sup>4</sup>	/ guise of kindness and friendship
Are none but instruments of fell deceit.	
They would have men sign bonds to borrow money, <sup>5</sup>	
And if the sums are <sup>o</sup> not repaid on time	/ loan is
Then, as forfeit, they would take everything.	
All that a man has earned in his lifetime <sup>6</sup>	
Would come to naught and end in tearful ruin. <sup>7</sup>	
'Tis an obscene, <sup>o</sup> despised greed they show— <sup>8</sup>	/ It is a foul
These heartless usurers. <sup>9</sup> There's a special place <sup>o</sup>	/ There is a place
In hell made just <sup>o</sup> for them.	/ reserved

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1. These opening lines of Antonio are not found in the original play; they were added to clarify the central conflict between Antonio and Shylock which is principally over usury not religion. In the opening of the original play we find Antonio lamenting about his somberness (i.e., his "sadness") yet Antonio's somber mood has no relevance to the play as a whole nor does it lay the groundwork for any action found in the play. [To understand usury as it was viewed in Elizabethan England, see Additional Note, 1.1.0]

2. / A plague upon the righteousness of man / A plague that crushes (/ destroys / ruins / shatters) the spirit of man

3. / And all their contracts, listing penalties / And all the loans they make with forfeitures

4. / Made with a show of kindness and of friendship / Made under pretense of kindness and friendship

5. Option, add line: ⟨Taking a loan beyond their means to pay,⟩

6. / All one has worked for and gained in his life / All that a man has gained in years of work

7. / Would soon come to a sad and ruinous end / Would end in sadness and a tearful ruin

8. / 'Tis a greed most obscene and despicable / It is a show of greed, gross and despicable

9. / They but entrap those who are most desperate:  
Having them sign a bond to borrow money  
For which they cannot repay. Then, as forfeit,  
And after great despair, all that these men have  
Is taken, all they have worked for is lost;  
All is but gone to these heartless usurers.



<And why it lingers on><sup>14</sup> I've yet to learn.<sup>o</sup> / And why it holds me so // {I am to learn}  
 [And such a want-wit this mood<sup>o</sup> makes of me] {sadness} / this somber mood makes  
 [That I have much ado to know myself.]<sup>15</sup>

—Salarino

Your mind is tossing like the raging sea.<sup>o</sup> / like a ship at sea  
 There [*pointing*] are your argosies<sup>o</sup> with portly sails— / grand vessels  
 Streaming<sup>o</sup> upon the wave<sup>o</sup> like proud maestros<sup>o16</sup> / Moving {flood} / sea  
 Or like the grand displays of a sea pageant.<sup>17</sup>  
 See your ships rise above<sup>o</sup> the smaller boats<sup>o18</sup> {overpeer} // petty boats  
 That curtsy<sup>o</sup> to them in awe and reverence<sup>19</sup> / bow down / prostrate  
 As they fly by with their grand, woven wings.<sup>20</sup>  
 <Ah, what a sight it is!<sup>o</sup> / to see

—Salanio

Believe me, sir,

Were I involved in such ventures abroad<sup>o</sup> 21 / ventures of such risk  
 The better part of my concerns would rest<sup>o</sup> {affections would}  
 Upon<sup>o</sup> my hopes<sup>o</sup> abroad. And every day<sup>o</sup> 22 / Within // ships  
 I'd toss the grass<sup>o</sup> to know where blows the wind,<sup>o</sup> 23 / which way the winds blows  
 And peer<sup>o</sup> in maps for ports and piers and roads. / Peering

14. <**And why it lingers on**> / And why it grips me so

The line found in Q1 {*I am to learn*} is truncated, containing only two iambs (feet), as opposed to the usual five. Thus, the line as it appears is likely an error. This short line could have resulted from a smudge mark, which rendered the text unreadable, or by some other such error.

[For theories about this truncated line, See Additional Notes, 1.1.5]

15. There are several anomalies with respect to Antonio's opening lines, including the words 'you say' [2], the truncated line 5, and the repetitive and unsupported content of lines 6 and 7. Clearly these later two lines [6-7] are orphaned, repeat the sentiment of the previous lines, and weaken the overall import of the passage. Due to their prominent position in the original play (appearing in the opening passage), and being that they are rather harmless, they could remain; being that they weaken the passage, and may have found their way into the text by error, these lines should be deleted.

[See Additional Notes, 1.1.6]

16. {Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood} / Like proud magnificoes upon the wave,

**burghers:** wealthy Venetians, rich citizens

17. {Or as it were the pageants of the sea} / Or like the grand water-floats of a pageant

**pageants of the sea:** floats and displays that were used on ships, as part of a festive pageantry held on the water.

Pageants, like modern-day floats used in a parade, refer to large displays (such as castles, ships, or other staged figures) that were wheeled about the streets in ancient shows or pageants, or on ships that provided such displays.

18. {Do overpeer the petty traffickers} / Where they but dwarf the petty traffickers

**overpeer:** peer over, look down on, tower above

**petty traffickers:** / small trading ships

19. {That curtesy to them, do them reverence} / That come to lower their topsails in reverence / That bow to them and do them reverence

**cursy** (Q1 = **cursie**) / **curtsy:** bow down. Refers to the image of: a) small ships that bob around in the wake of a passing argosy, which seemingly (and impelled by the wake) bow down or curtsy to these larger ships, or b) small cargo ships that would lower their topmasts as a sign of respect at the passing of a much larger ship.

20. **woven wing:** The large sails of Antonio's ships are likened to the wings of flying bird (for their speed) or to the 'billowing splendor' of the clothes worn by wealthy burghers.

21. / Were all my wealth involved in such ventures

22. {I should be still} / Each day I'd be

**still:** always

23. {Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind}

And every object that might make me fear  
 Misfortune to my enterprise,<sup>o</sup> no doubt,  
 Would make me worry.<sup>o</sup> <sup>24</sup>

/ undertaking / venture, there's no  
 {Would make me sad}

—Salarino <sup>25</sup> My breath,<sup>o</sup> cooling broth,  
 Would blow me to a shiver<sup>o</sup> when I thought  
 What harm a wind too great might do at sea.  
 Each time I saw the sandy hour-glass run,  
 I'd think of shallow flats and sandy banks,  
 And see my ship, the *Andrew*,<sup>o</sup> docked in sand,  
 With her top-sail a-hung<sup>o</sup> below her ribs—<sup>o</sup>  
 Kiss her grave just like<sup>o</sup> a burial shroud. <sup>26 27</sup>  
 And should I go to church, instead of praying,  
 I'd see the holy edifice of stone  
 And straightaway think of the dang'rous rocks  
 Which, by a mere touch<sup>o</sup> of my vessel's side,  
 Would spread her cache<sup>o</sup> of spice upon the wave,<sup>o</sup> <sup>28</sup>  
 And robe the roaring waters with her silk,  
 And thus, in sum, reduce my worth<sup>o</sup> to naught.<sup>o</sup>  
 Had I the mind<sup>o</sup> to think on all of this,  
 And should I think on all that could go wrong,  
 I, too, would have a mind o'ercome by dread.<sup>o</sup> <sup>29</sup>  
 [So tell me not: I know Antonio  
 Is loath<sup>o</sup> to think upon his parlous ventures.<sup>o</sup>] <sup>30</sup>

{wind} / soup  
 {an ague} / a frenzy / into a chill  
  
 {And see my wealthy *Andrew*}  
 / hanging / fallen // hull  
 / as would  
  
 / gentle stroke  
 / prize // {stream} /sea  
  
 / wealth // nothing  
  
 {sadness} / worry / fear / o'erly concerned  
  
 {sad} / grave // risky ventures // {merchandise}

24. {Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt} / Misfortune to my ventures would, no doubt

25. By this description, and the preceding ones, we see that Salarino and Salanio are well-versed in the jargon of merchants, and both appear to be involved in the business of trade, as is Antonio.

26. / Laid out upon her burial like a shroud / Just like a shroud placed upon her grave / A shroud that kisses the ground of her burial / And now to kiss the ground wherein she lies

27. {Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs | To kiss her burial}

**vailing:** lowering, bringing down

**ribs:** the hull of a ship, made up of wooden ribs or center beams

The image here is of a ship overturned, with her top-sails now lower than her hull, kissing the ground. This is the place of the ship's burial, where the once proud sails have now become its burial shroud. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.28]

28. / Would scatter all her spices on the wave

29. / I, too, would have a mind that's fraught with sadness<sup>o</sup>

/ besieged by worry / filled with distress / sad and distraught

Salarino (and Salanio) are describing Antonio's risky business ventures, which would elicit concern, worry, agitation, stress, etc. rather than sadness. (Thus, 'sadness' in this context should be taken to mean, 'worry, concern, distress,' etc.) This talk of Antonio's sadness seems to be an import of an earlier draft of the play, where the play initially opened with Antonio talking with Gratiano and Lorenzo about his (Antonio's) sad nature. Later in the scene we see the same conversation about Antonio's sadness repeated with Gratiano—and this relates to Antonio's sad and depressed nature, and not a new-arising sadness, related to a specific conditions (as thought by Salarino and Salanio).

30. / Is much distressed over his parlous ventures.

These two lines appear to be too bold for Salarino or Salanio—sounding more like something Gratiano would say. These lines may be vestiges of an earlier draft that involved a conversation between Antonio and Gratiano. Thus, these two lines could be deleted without any meaningful loss and it might slightly improve the flow of the text.

—Antonio

Believe me—no. I thank my fortune for it:  
My ventures are not in one vessel<sup>o</sup> trusted,  
Nor in one place, nor does my wealth depend<sup>o</sup>  
Upon the fortune of this present year.  
Therefore, my ventures do not cause distress.<sup>o</sup>

{bottom}

{nor is my whole estate}

{makes me not sad} / are not of concern

—Salanio

Why then, you are in love.

/Why then you must be in love, yea?

—Antonio

Nay, nay!

{Fie, fie} / No, no

—Salanio<sup>31</sup>

Not in love neither? Then you must be somber<sup>o</sup><sup>32</sup>  
Because you are not destined<sup>o</sup> to be merry;  
For 'twere<sup>o</sup> as easy now for you to laugh,  
And leap,<sup>o</sup> and say that you are merry, only  
Because you are not sad. <sup>o</sup> By the two faces  
Of Janus—one that laughs and one that cries—<sup>33 34</sup>  
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:<sup>o</sup>  
Some that will smile so much their eyes have shut<sup>o</sup><sup>35</sup>  
And laugh like parrots<sup>36</sup> when all else are crying.<sup>o</sup>  
And others so acerbic<sup>o</sup> in their mode<sup>38</sup>  
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile

/ {sad} / grave

/ fated / fashioned / humoured

/ 'Twould be

/ dance

/ grave

/ day

/ are half-shut

/ at a mournful tune<sup>37</sup>

/ others be so gloomy

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31. Previously, Antonio's "sadness" was thought to be venture-related, then love-related—both causes that Antonio denied. Here Salanio is surmising that Antonio must be sad because it is his nature to be sad. This philosophical address of Antonio's sad nature is repeated later in the scene by Gratziano; such speculation seem fitting the irreverence of Gratziano not Salanio. Thus, the line mouthed here by Salanio are unbecoming and out of place. It is likely, that in an earlier draft, Salanio's words were mouthed by Gratziano (or possibly Lorenzo) and herein transposed (somewhat imperfectly) to Salanio. [See Additional Notes, I.1.47]

32. / Neither in love? Ah, then you must be sad

33. {Now, by two-headed Janus}

**Janus:** the Roman god of exits and entrances. He has two faces which look in opposite directions: one face is smiling and the other is frowning.

34. / Now, by Janus's | Two faces, one that laughs and one that cries

/ But here we see | Two sides of Janus—one laughing, one crying

35. {some that will evermore peep through their eyes}

This line refers to people who smile so much so that their cheek muscles have atrophied and now keep their eyes half-shut—and now they can only peep through them. The image, akin to the laughing face of Janus, is of a person smiling so much that it looks as if he is wearing the mask of a smiling face.

/ Some that can barely see through so much smiling / Some that e'er peep through eyes half-shut by smiling

36. **laugh like parrots:** a) refers to the parrot who by rote response laughs at everything, even a mournful tune. Hence, laughing like a parrot refers to one who laughs at everything; one who is always laughing; b) implies a loud screeching laughter rather than the actual laughter of a parrot.

37. {at a bagpiper} The music of a bagpipe was considered woeful, which should bring on tears not laughter.

38. / And there be others of such gloomy aspect (/sullen mode) / And others of such a vinegary aspect

Though stern-browed Nestor swear the jest be funny.<sup>39</sup>

*Enter Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratziano.*

Here comes Bassanio, your most favored friend,<sup>o</sup> / dearest of friends {most noble kinsman}  
With Gratziano and Lorenzo. Farewell.  
We leave you now with better company.

—Salarino  
We<sup>o</sup> would have stayed until we<sup>o</sup> made you merry, / I  
If worthier friends had not prevented us.<sup>o</sup> / me

—Antonio  
<Nay Salarino—and my friend Salanio—><sup>40</sup>  
Your worth is very dear in my regard.<sup>o</sup> / esteem  
I take it your own business calls you,  
And you embrace th'occasion<sup>o</sup> to depart. / the moment

—Salarino [*to those approaching*]  
Good morrow, my good lords.<sup>o</sup> / Good day, good gentlemen

—Bassanio [*also in greeting*]  
Good signors both, when shall we laugh? Say when?  
You've become strangers. Must it be that way?<sup>41</sup>

—Salanio<sup>42</sup>  
We'll make our leisure time<sup>o</sup> fit in with<sup>o</sup> yours.<sup>43</sup> {leisures} / free time {to attend on}

—Lorenzo  
My friend<sup>o</sup> Bassanio, here<sup>o</sup> you have found Antonio. {lord} {since}

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39. {Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable}

**Nestor:** a Greek officer of the *Iliad*, famous for his somberness and gravity.

/ Not even at a jest able to rouse | Stern-browed Nestor to rambunctious laughter.

/ Not even at a joke that could bestir | The somber Nestor into drunken laughter.

40. The name of these two characters, Salarino and Salanio, are never mentioned in the play even though it is customary to name a character upon his entrance or during the first scene in which he appears. The failure to ever mention the names of these minor but significant characters may be because they were not conceived as part of the original draft but added as part of a later draft. Thus, throughout the play, these characters remain nameless. To rectify this omission, a line that includes both their names, could be added here.

41. {You grow exceedingly strange. Must it be so?}

**exceedingly strange:** (a) like strangers, (b) strange in your ways, i.e., too reserved, too serious, not willing to get together for a laugh.

**Must it be so?** (a) i.e., it should not be that way and we must do something about it—such as get together for a laugh. (b) must you be so serious and not willing to laugh with us.

42. In Q1 the speech heading reads *Sal*. Most commentators assign this line to *Salarino*. Here it is attributed to *Salanio*.

43. This exchange seems more of a gratuitous gesture than an actual intention to get together. We sense a cordial distance between Bassanio and Salarino-Salanio, as they all seek Antonio's attention.

[*aside, to Salarino*]

We, too, will leave soon,<sup>o</sup> but at dinner time,<sup>o</sup>  
I pray you, have<sup>o</sup> in mind where we must meet.<sup>44</sup> / bear

— Salarino<sup>45</sup>  
We will not fail you.

—Salanio                    ⟨We'll be there as planned.⟩

*Exeunt Salarino and Salanio*

—Gratziano  
You look not well, Signior Antonio;<sup>46</sup>  
You care too much for the things of this world.<sup>47</sup>  
The ones who buy this world with too much care  
Are apt to lose it for want of enjoyment.<sup>48</sup> / Do end up losing it for want of joy  
Believe me friend, you don't look like yourself.<sup>o49</sup> / you're not being yourself

—Antonio  
I hold the world but as the world, Gratziano,  
A stage where every man must play a part—  
And mine's a sad<sup>o</sup> one. / grave

—Gratziano                    Let me<sup>o</sup> play the fool: / *me*  
With mirth and laughter let old smiles<sup>o</sup> come,<sup>o</sup> { wrinkles }  
And let my liver rather heat with joy<sup>o</sup> { wine }  
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.  
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,<sup>o</sup> / veins run warm with blood  
Sit like a marble<sup>o</sup> statue<sup>o</sup> of his grandsire,<sup>50</sup> / granite // carving

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44. The meeting Lorenzo is referring to involves a plan to steal Jessica [2.4] from her father's house. This meeting involves the two Sals, not Bassanio. Hence, Lorenzo's reminder of such a meeting to Bassanio—and the assurance made in the next line by Bassanio [*I will not fail you*—as found in the original, is amiss. [See next note].

45. In the original, this line is attributed to Bassanio, and reads: 'I will not fail you' and is spoken after Salarino and Salanio have already exited. Thus Bassanio is telling Lorenzo that he (Bassanio) will not fail him (Lorenzo) and that he will be there as planned. However, there is no future plan involving Lorenzo and Bassanio. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.72]

46. Some commentators suggest that the play may have initially opened here, at line 73. Gratziano's opening statement resembles that of Antonio's opening, and the discourse that follows is similar in tone to the previous conversation had with Salarino and Salanio. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.73] [See Appendix: *The Three Sallies*]

47. { You have too much respect upon the world }

48. { They lose it that do buy it with much care }

/ When too concerned about what can go wrong | You can't enjoy all the things that are right.

/ All this concern with loss does have a cost: | You can't enjoy all the great things that you have.

Gratziano is saying that one who buys life with too much care (i.e., spends too much time in worry and sadness), cannot enjoy life. In other words, things usually turn out poorly for one who is too concerned about how things will turn out.

49. { Believe me, you are marvellously changed }

/ Believe me, you are decidedly different / Believe me you look nothing like yourself / Believe me when I say, you're not yourself / Believe me, friend, you are completely changed

50. { Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster }

Sleep when he wakes, and become ill with jaundice<sup>o</sup> 51 / bring about the jaundice  
 By being peevish<sup>o</sup> from morning till night? / cranky / sad-faced  
 I say Antonio—I speak out of love— 52  
 There are some men who show no expression, / reveal no emotion  
 Their face is held in a willful stillness  
 Just like the muck cov'ring<sup>o</sup> a stagnant pond; 53 / atop  
 They hope that others will look well upon them 54  
 As men of wisdom, gravity, and depth,<sup>o</sup> 55 {and profound conceit}  
 As who should say,<sup>o</sup> 'I am Sir Oracle,  
 And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!' / Who proudly say  
 O my Antonio, I do know of those<sup>o</sup> {these}  
 Who are reputed<sup>o</sup> wise for saying naught, / Who are but held as  
 When I am sure if they should move to speak  
 'Twould almost<sup>o</sup> dam the ears of those who listen 56 / surely  
 And cause their brothers to say they are fools.  
 I'll tell thee more of this another time.  
 But fish not with this melancholy bait  
 To gain the worthless<sup>o</sup> opinion of others, / For the ill-gained / unvalued  
 That one can catch<sup>o</sup> as eas'ly as fool gudgeon— 57 / That can be caught  
 (A fish disposed to bite<sup>o</sup> at any<sup>o</sup> bait.) / well-known to bite // ev'ry  
 Come good Lorenzo. Fare thee well for now; <sup>o</sup>  
 I'll finish with my preaching<sup>o</sup> after dinner. {awhile}  
 {end my exhortation}

—Lorenzo

Well, we will leave you then, till dinner-time. 58  
 I must be one of these same dumb wise men

51. {Sleep when he wakes, and creep into the jaundice} / creep into an illness  
 / Sleep when awake and give himself an illness

**jaundice:** a disease related to the liver and caused by an excess of yellow bile; as such, it brings a yellowish complexion to the skin and whites of the eyes. Up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this disease was thought to have a psychosomatic origin. Hence, Gratiano is saying that Antonio is going to get jaundice as a result his depressed disposition (which makes him appear as though he is asleep when awake).

52. {I tell the what, Antonio— | I love thee, and 'tis my love that speaks:}

53. {There are a sort of men whose visages | Do cream and mantle like a standing pond | And do a willful stillness entertain}

**cream and mantle:** cover over and mask; become pale and mask-like. This image suggests a) the algae that floats upon the surface of a stagnant pond (covering the interior of the pond), or b) the covering of cream on milk.

[See Additional Notes, 1.1.90]

54. {With purpose to be dressed in an opinion}

55. {Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit} / As men of profound wisdom and insight.

**gravity:** authority, seriousness, weight

**profound conceit:** deep thinking; those who deeply contemplate the matter

56. {If they should speak, would almost dam those ears}

**dam:** dam, clog up, block, stop **damn:** damn, curse, foul

57. {But fish not with this melancholy bait | For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.}

**fool gudgeon:** gudgeon are fish which were thought to be gullible, easy believers in the bait, (and which would bite and anything). Thus they were easy to catch. Some editions use Pope's emendation of: *fool's gudgeon*.

**opinion:** the opinion that others will think you are wise because you look sad and do not open your mouth.

58. There are three direct references that the parties are going meet later for dinner [70, 104, 105], plus a response to those references [72]. Is *dinner* in these references the same as the *supper* which Bassanio has the night he leaves for Belmont or is there some other meeting indicated?

For Gratziano never lets me speak.

—Gratziano

Well, keep my company for two more years

And you'll forget the sound of your own tongue.<sup>o</sup> / voice

—Antonio

Farewell. I'll grow in talk next time.<sup>59</sup>

—Gratziano

Please do—

Silence is virtue<sup>o</sup> in dried tongue of ox

/ preferred / better/ prais'ble

And in craggy old maids who've got the pox.<sup>60</sup>

*Exeunt Gratziano and Lorenzo*

—Antonio

He speaks a great deal yet says<sup>o</sup> not a thing.<sup>61</sup>

/ a lot yet he says

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59. {Fare you well. I'll grow a talker for this gear} / Farewell, I'll grow more of a talker next time

**gear:** a) discourse, talk. 'Farewell, I'll take your advice and become more of a talker (next time we meet);

b) matter, affair. 'Farewell, now that you're gone, and I'm with Bassanio, I'll become a talker—for this matter, now that there is something relevant to speak about.'

c) reason 'Farewell, I'll talk more (with respect to your advice) so that others do not think that I silent (for the reason you mentioned) to try and get others to think I am full of wisdom and profound understanding—which is not the case.'

60. {Thanks, i'faith, for silence is only commendable | In a neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible.}

/ Please do, for silence is best in ox-tongue, | And in craggy old maids no longer young.

/ Please do, for silence's best in ox-tongue dried, | And in a maid too plain to be a bride.

**neat's tongue dried:** the dried tongue of an ox, which is commendable precisely because one does not want this kind of tongue to talk—one wants it to be dead, dried, and ready to eat. (Some commentators suggest that this reference to *neat's tongue dried* may be a bawdy reference to the dried up penis of an old man which cannot become erect—but why Gratziano would find this commendable is unclear).

**not vendible:** not saleable. Refers to a maid who cannot be sold (with a dowry) in the way of marriage—and thus a maid who is worthless and unsaleable. The implication is that someone who is old and unwed (and whom nobody wants) would speak with bitter and complaining words—so her silence would be welcomed. Some interpret *not vendible* as referring to a maid who is *too young* and not yet saleable (in the marketplace of marriage)—and whose talk might be witless. It seems more likely that Gratziano would commend silence in a craggy old maid (who is wont to complain) rather than in a young maid who is not yet of a marriageable age. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.112]

61. {It is that any thing now.}

/ He speaks and speaks, and yet says not a thing / He speaks a lot, yet says a lot of nothing.

This line, as it appears in Q1, is missing three syllables and does not fit the standard meter. Editors have treated this anomalous line in several ways: A) Left it as is. B) Deleted the opening 'It' and posited that the line as a question: 'Is that anything now?'—which means: 'What was all that talk about?' This renders the line somewhat intelligible, but does not correct the line structure. (This emendation was first proposed by Rowe). C) Changed *It* to *Yet*: 'Yet is that anything now?' With this emendation, Antonio is apparently referring to the newfound silence (which is being enjoyed since Gratziano, the talker, has just left). This emendation is based upon the supposition that 'Yet' was found in the original manuscript, and somehow became 'Yt' and then 'It.' All these textual contortions do not improve the line. It is most likely that the original contained a full five iambs and part of the line had become unreadable. Thus, the typesetter did his best in setting what part of the line he could read.

We find that the lines of Bassanio, which follow this one, are also corrupt in that they do not adhere to the standard meter. Hence, one possibility is that the name *Gratziano* was originally intended to be part of Antonio's line, and somehow got shifted to Bassanio. If so, the lines might have appeared as follows:

*Ant.* Did *Gratziano* say anything now?

*Bass.* He speaks an infinite deal of nothing,

Ay, more than any man in all of Venice . . .

[See Additional Notes, 1.1.113.]

—Bassanio <sup>62</sup>

Our Gratiano speaks an infinite

Amount of nothing, ° more than any man

/ nonsense

In all of Venice. His main point is like °

/ And, his final point is

Two grains of wheat, hid in two bushels ° of chaff, <sup>63</sup> <sup>64</sup>

/ heaps / mounds / piles / pails

Where you must seek all day ere you find them,

And when you have them, they're not worth the search. <sup>65</sup>

—Antonio

Well, tell me now about this same lady

To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage, <sup>66</sup>

That you, today, promised to tell me of.

---

62. Bassanio's opening talk can be seen as a chummy elaboration upon Antonio's previous remark about Gratiano's empty talk. In Q1, these lines do not appear in meter, which is odd since all the verse preceding it and following it, are in meter. Moreover, these are the first lines uttered by our romantic hero, which, though light-hearted and playful, should, at least, be delivered in the standard meter. It could be, however, for no clear reason, that this non-metered opening by Bassanio was a deliberate attempt to first present Bassanio as somewhat awkward with his words. Most likely, however, (and consistent with Antonio's previous line, which is corrupt) this non-metered opening by Bassanio resulted from some problem with the reading of the text and not by the author's design. Q1 (uncorrected) reads: {*Gratiano* speaks an infinite deale of nothing more then any man in all Venice, his reasons are as two graines of wheate hid in two bushels of chaffe: you shall seeke all day ere you finde them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.}. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.118]

63. {His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff:}

**his reasons:** his point, his conclusions; the value of what he says

/ All of his wit are as two grains of wheat | Hid in two bushels full of worthless chaff—

64. / In all of Venice. And, his final point

Is like a grain of wheat in a heap of chaff:

65. / He speaks an infinite deal of nothing, | More so than any man in all of Venice. | His point resembles but two grains of wheat | Hid in two bushels of chaff. You must seek | All day before you find them; and when you | Finally have them, they're not worth the search.

66. {Well, tell me now what lady is the same | To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage}

Some commentators surmise that Antonio's sadness has come about due to Bassanio's secret rendezvous with a woman. However, this conclusion is forced and unlikely. Antonio's sadness is a result of his disposition, which is confirmed by Antonio when he states that the part he has been selected to play, on the world stage, is a sad one [78-79]. Bassanio's potential love interest may have exacerbated Antonio's worrisome condition but this, too, is unlikely, since Bassanio did not even know the identity of the woman with whom Bassanio was meeting. All Antonio knew was that Bassanio was meeting with some woman, whose identity he swore to keep secret—the meeting of which he promised to tell Antonio about (after it was over). Bassanio was well aware of the nature of the meeting, and that the subject discussed involved Antonio in some way; and that is why Bassanio told Antonio about the 'secret' meeting and told him that he (Bassanio) was going to tell him about what he learned from the meeting today. (We can assume that the meeting took place yesterday, as Bassanio would not delay in telling Antonio about it—especially if Antonio's help, with respect to actuating the plan formulated during the meeting, was needed.)

Who was this lady to whom Bassanio swore to have a secret with (and to keep the meeting as well as the the identity of the woman with whom he was meeting with a secret)? Certainly it was not Portia, as Portia would not have arranged such a meeting nor would she have any reason to meet with Bassanio. Neither was this a meeting with some love interest or it would not have been so secretive and Bassanio would have no reason to discuss it with Antonio.

In the meeting we know that Bassanio learned about Portia and the lottery—yet this was not something that needed to be sealed by a vow of secrecy as this was public knowledge. The meeting must have had an undisclosed purpose such that Bassanio could not reveal the identity of the lady with whom he was meeting to his dearest friend (neither before or after the meeting.) Nor was Bassanio at liberty to tell his dearest friend the purpose of the meeting or what was discussed in the meeting. All we know is that Bassanio does not talk about the meeting nor does he reveal the identity of the woman he met with—the one he promised to tell Antonio about. He only talks about the course of action he needs to take as a result of the meeting .

So, whom did Bassanio meet with and what was the purpose of the meeting? All indications suggest that he met with Nerissa, Portia's trusted handmaid, to discuss Portia and the lottery (unbeknownst to Portia). Bassanio told Antonio about the meeting because, as he correctly anticipated, he needed to borrow a large sum of money (from Antonio) in order to carry out the plan that was hatched between Nerissa and himself in the meeting. [See, Additional Notes, 1.1.120]

—Bassanio<sup>67</sup>

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,  
How much I have depleted my savings<sup>o</sup> {disabled mine estate}<sup>68</sup>  
By sometimes<sup>o</sup> showing a more swelling port<sup>o</sup> {something} / lavish style<sup>69</sup>  
Than my faint means could rightfully support;<sup>o</sup> {would grant continuance}  
Nor do I moan about being deprived<sup>o</sup> {abridged}/ reduced  
Of<sup>o</sup> such a noble life.<sup>o</sup> Now my chief care<sup>70</sup> / From {noble rate} / noble style  
Is to come fully clear<sup>o</sup> of all my debts<sup>o</sup> {fairly off} {the great debts}  
Wherein<sup>o</sup> my years of prodigal<sup>o</sup> spending<sup>71</sup> / In which // of wastefulness and  
Hath left me gagged.<sup>72</sup> To you Antonio<sup>73</sup>  
I owe the most in money and in love,  
And by your love I am granted permission<sup>o74</sup> {I have a warranty}  
To unburden all<sup>o</sup> my plans<sup>o</sup> and purposes / To tell you all {plots}  
On how to clear myself of all my debt.<sup>o</sup> <sup>75</sup> / of every debt

—Antonio

I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it,<sup>o</sup> / tell me your plan  
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,

---

67. Bassanio tells nothing of the woman he met with, only about his plan and his need of Antonio's help

68. Bassanio seems to be part of an aristocratic class called 'gentlemen'—a class of young, single men living off their parentage inheritance (or estate). As they do not need to work, their days are concerned with entertainment, parties, feasting, womanizing, etc.

69. {By something showing a more swelling port} / By showing off a more lavish life-style

70. / Nor do I make moan that such noble<sup>o</sup> spending / lordly  
/ Has been abridged.<sup>o</sup> But now my chief concern / cut short

71. {Wherein my time something too prodigal}

**too prodigal:** too extravagant, too wasteful

72. {Hath left me gagged}

**gaged:** a) engaged (with creditors), indebted, owing, entangled, pledged, bound

b) gaged, bound by a gag, muzzled. The implication here is that Bassanio wasted all his money on high living and feasting (*something too prodigal*) and is now gaging (choking) on this pile debt in the same way as one might gag on biting off more food than he can chew.

73. a) Is to come clear<sup>o</sup> of all the debts amassed<sup>o</sup> / pay off // accrued  
During my time of prodigal spending,<sup>o</sup> / improvident waste  
Which now I gag upon. To you, my friend

b) Is to come fully clear from all my debts  
Which I've amassed from years<sup>o</sup> of wasteful spending  
Which now I gag upon. To you, my friend

c) Is to come fully clear of the great debts  
/ Wherein my time of wonton wastefulness | Hath left me now to gag upon. To you  
/ Which all my time of prodigal expense | Hath left me bound and indebted. To you

74. {And from your love I have a warranty}

/ And by your love, I have a guarantee / And now your love does grant me permission

75. Here Bassanio claims: *I will unburden all my plots and purposes* yet he never discloses anything to Antonio about the woman with whom he met nor his true plot—a plot which involves winning Portia by way of a lottery not by customary courtship (as Antonio may be led to believe). Bassanio tells Antonio about Portia, and his sureness of winning her, but does not disclose the means (i.e. the lottery), nor the identity of the woman with whom he met, nor the true reason as to why he is so certain (and 'questionless') of victory. Bassanio (leading Antonio to believe his venture involves a typical courtship scenario) tells Antonio he is sure to win her because she once looked upon him favorably—but such a favorable glance has no bearing on his odds of winning her. It is irrelevant. He can only win her by choosing the right chest, through his own wit and wisdom—or through some other kind of help—and not through anything Portia's favorable glances could bestow.

Within the eye of honour, be assured<sup>76</sup>  
My purse, my person,° my extremest means°  
Lie all unlockèd to to your every need.°<sup>77</sup>

/ My bank, my body // and my every means  
{ to your occasions } / to what e're you may need

—Bassanio

In my school days, when I had lost an arrow,°  
I shot another one in the same way  
And in the same direction yet,° this time,<sup>78</sup>  
With a more careful° and advisèd watch;  
Then, in my vent'ring° for the second arrow,  
I oft found both.<sup>79</sup> I urge° this childhood proof°  
Because what follows is pure innocence:°<sup>80</sup>  
I owe you much and, like a wilful youth,  
That which I owe is lost; but, if you'd please°  
To shoot another shaft the self-same way°  
As you did shoot the first, [and loan to me  
Again, one more amount,°] I do not doubt—  
Watching the aim with care—that I'll find both:<sup>81</sup>  
I will return° the sums that now you risk,°

{ shaft }  
/ but  
/ and  
/ much keener  
/ in adventure / my searching  
/ give // lesson / story  
/ my plan holds the same innocence  
  
/ were  
  
/ another sum  
  
/ bring back // loan / give

76. { And if it stand, as you yourself still do, | Within the eye of honour }

> if your plan is righteous, honorable, above board, ethical, etc.

Antonio is adding a caveat here: Bassanio's plan must stand within the eye of honour. However, the plan as we know it, which involves a chance lottery (or, as we may surmise, receiving a guarantee of help from Nerissa if certain conditions are met) is not honorable. As such, Bassanio does not tell Antonio the actual plan, nor "unburden all his pots and purposes." He presents what appears to be a normal courtship scenario without any mention of the actual plot or circumstances. (When does Antonio finally learn about the true nature of the chance venture?—and what does he do when he finds out that Bassanio has borrowed the money under a false pretense?) It seems Antonio's blind love for Bassanio causes him to see past all of Bassanio's flaws, even the avoidable action of failing to cure Antonio's bond when he had means enough, and time enough, to do so. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.137]

77. Bassanio asking Antonio for money—yet again—might suggest some kind of abuse. In the past Bassanio has borrowed money from Antonio to 'show a more swelling port' and to live beyond his means—and he made no attempt to repay any of the borrowed money. Here again, knowing that most of Antonio's money is tied up in his ventures, Bassanio again comes to Antonio. It seems that Antonio loves this young man, who is high-spirited and who brings to Antonio a sense of life he is missing—so much so that he is willing to do anything for him. Bassanio is aware of Antonio's love and he uses that affection—perhaps in an innocent or careless way, as opposed to a deceitful or knowingly abusive way—for his own financial benefit. Bassanio, too, has genuine love for Antonio, so the relationship is one of mutual support and friendship.

78. { I shot his fellow of the selfsame flight | The selfsame way }

/ I shot another in the selfsame way | And in the selfsame direction, but then

/ I'd see exactly where the next one fell, | And in venturing forth I oft found both.

79. { To find the other forth, and by adventuring both, | I oft found both }

/ Then I would venture for the second shaft, | And oft found both.

/ Then, by adventuring for the second, | I oft found both.

**oft:** often—often, but not always; the venture had some risk and sometimes both arrows were lost.

80. Not true! The plan—which is never truly told to Antonio—is far from innocent. In the highest embodiment (and most unlikely scenario) it involves a deceitful appearance and an uncertain choice between three caskets; in the lowest embodiment (and most likely scenario) it involves "cheating" (for good reasons, no doubt) and the unfair winning of another's wealth. The plan, moreover, is somewhat mercenary; it is first proposed as a way to clear up all of Bassanio's debts rather than the defiant and risky action of someone truly in love.

81. { . . . I do not doubt, | As I will watch the aim, or to find both }

I do not doubt. . .

/ That I will watch the aim and then find both

/ I'll watch the aim with care and find them both

And funds enough<sup>o</sup> to clear<sup>o</sup> my former debts.<sup>o</sup> 82

/ And all I need // rest

—Antonio 83

You know me well, yet herein spend<sup>o</sup> but time,

/ waste

To try my love with needless circumstance<sup>o</sup>: 84

/ burdensome detail

And certainly,<sup>o</sup> you offer me more wrong,<sup>85</sup>

{ And out of doubt }

In doubting<sup>o</sup> my utmost desire to help,<sup>86 87</sup>

/ questioning

Than if you had made waste of<sup>o</sup> all I have.<sup>o</sup>

/ laid waste to // my wealth

Then do but say to me<sup>o</sup> what I should do,

/ All you need do is say

The most you know that<sup>o</sup> may be done by me,

{ That in your knowledge }

And I am pressed unto it.<sup>o</sup> Therefore speak. 88

/ And I'll be bound to do it

—Bassanio

Alas, there is in Belmont a lady

/ a lady in Belmont

Who has since come upon a countless fortune;<sup>o</sup> 89

/ great wealth and fortune

And she is fair and, fairer than all words,<sup>o</sup> 90

{ that word }

Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes,<sup>o</sup> from her eyes,<sup>o</sup>

/ often // with her glance

---

82. { Or bring your latter hazard back again | And thankfully rest debtor for the first. }

**or:** and

**latter hazard:** your present loan or risk (which I will watch more carefully than I did your earlier loans).

**debtors for the first:** all my previous debts, debtors from before (i.e., the first arrow which has been lost).

**thankfully rest:** pay back (with gratitude); put to rest, clear up

Thus, I will bring back to you all the money you risk on me now (the second arrow) and, finding this second arrow (which is all of Portia's wealth) I will be able to play off all my previous debts (which are the first arrows that I lost).

[See Additional Notes, 1.1.151]

83. Antonio is so eager to accommodate Bassanio that he agrees to help him without so much as hearing his plan. He assumes that Bassanio is going to woo Portia in accordance with customary acts of courtship; he assumes this courtship is "within the eye of honour"; he hears nothing of the hazardous risk involved. From what we come to know (and something which Bassanio intimates in his proposed plan to pay off his debts) the plan is decidedly a scheme; as we surmise, Bassanio can only "win" Portia by winning a lottery (i.e., by choosing the right casket) which is something he is sure accomplish only if he has been assured of receiving some kind of help with that task.

84. { To wind about my love with circumstance: }

**wind:** a) blow wind, be long-winded. **wind about:** curve, meander, be indirect

**wind about my love:** not approach me directly; not know that I love you and will give you what you ask (without your needing to waste breath on details).

**with circumstance:** needless details, circumlocutions, beating around the bush

85. { And, out of doubt, you do me more wrong }

**out of doubt:** beyond doubt

86. { In making question of my uttermost }

/ In questioning my uttermost compliance<sup>o</sup> / abidance

87. / And try my love<sup>o</sup> with circuitous pleas<sup>o</sup>

/ strain my heart // long-winded appeals

That one so dear as you need never make;

And now your doubt about my willingness

To give my uttermost,<sup>o</sup> does me more wrong / you everything

88. A loose rendering:

/ All you need do is tell me what you want; | Surely you know I will give it to you, | For my heart cannot say 'no': therefore speak. All this is an expression of Antonio's slavish and beseeching love for Bassanio

89. { In Belmont is a lady richly left }

/ Who has recently come upon a fortune / Who has been left a fortune beyond measure

90. / And she is fair, and even more than 'fair' / And she is fair, more fair than words can say

I did receive fair hints of her affection.<sup>91</sup>  
 Her name is *Portia*—and she’s worth no less<sup>o</sup> {and nothing undervalued}  
 Than Cato’s daughter, Brutus’ *Portia*.<sup>o</sup>  
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,  
 For the four winds blow in from every coast  
 Renownèd<sup>o</sup> suitors; and her sunny<sup>o</sup> locks / golden  
 Adorn<sup>o</sup> her temples like a golden fleece<sup>92</sup> {Hang on}  
 Which turns her country<sup>o</sup> estate<sup>o</sup> at Belmont / beautiful // gardens  
 Into the promising<sup>o</sup> shores of Colchis.<sup>93</sup> / beckoning / venturous / glistening  
 Where many Jasons come in quest of her.<sup>94</sup>  
 O my Antonio,<sup>95</sup> had I but the means  
 To hold a rival place with one of them<sup>o</sup> <sup>96</sup> / along with them  
 My mind portends<sup>o</sup> me of certain success,<sup>97</sup> / foretells  
 That I, without doubt, should<sup>o</sup> be fortunate.<sup>98</sup>

—Antonio  
 You knows’t that all my fortunes are at sea;  
 Neither have I money, nor sufficient store<sup>o</sup> <sup>99</sup> {commodity} / goods to sell  
 To raise a present sum.<sup>o</sup> Therefore, go forth, / To raise the sum right now

91. {I did receive fair speechless messages}  
**fair speechless messages:** beautiful and affectionate glances (which silently told me of her affection)

/ I did receive her<sup>o</sup> loving messages  
 / I did receive the most adoring glances<sup>o</sup> / loving of glances

92. **golden fleece:** Jason was the rightful heir to his father’s throne but was deprived of his rights by his uncle. Thus, to settle the matter, Jason and his uncle made an agreement: if Jason could bring back the golden fleece from Colchis (which all believed was an impossible task) then Jason would be restored to his throne and gain back his kingdom. So Jason and the Argonauts traveled to the shores (strand) of Colchis to retrieve the golden fleece. [See Additional Notes, 1.1.170]

93. {Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos’ strand}  
 / Which now makes Belmont like the shores of Colchis

**seat:** residence

**Colchos’ strand** (also ‘strand’): the shores of Colchis—the land where the Golden Fleece resided. The image evoked is of many suitors (like Jason seeking his fortune) landing upon the shores of Belmont to obtain Portia (who is likened to the golden fleece in both riches and beauty).

94. This line can be added for further clarity: (Each one in quest of her riches and beauty.)

95. This plea of Bassanio takes a few shifts: first from a personal connection to Portia, to a classical description of her beauty, and back to a more personal plea to Antonio, with *O my Antonio*.

96. Why is Bassanio impelled to borrow such a large sum of money and put his friend at risk? [See Additional Note, 1.1.174]

97. {I have a mind presages me such thrift}  
 / I have a mind foretells me of success / I have a premonition of success / My mind tells me of assured success

**presages:** foretells, augurs, give a premonition of  
**such thrift:** such success, such profit (which will come from Portia and her fortune)

98. {I should questionless be fortunate.}  
 / That I, without a doubt, shall win her fortune / That I, without question, should win her love.  
 How does Bassanio come to be questionless, without doubt, about being fortunate—about winning Portia through a chance drawing of one of three chests? Is he so certain of his ability, or does something else portend his assured success? And what, exactly, is Bassanio questionless about?—that he will win Portia’s love, or the lottery, or both?

[See Additional Notes, 1.1.76]

The theory here is that in a prior meeting (with someone to whom Bassanio “swore a secret pilgrimage”) Bassanio received assurance from Nerissa that she would help him with the lottery if he could win Portia’s love. Thus, having received prior hints from Portia, and confident in his charm and wooing ability, Bassanio was “doubtless” that he could win Portia’s heart, get Nerissa’s help, and win Portia and her wealth by way of the lottery. This theory is also supported in 2.9: when Nerissa hears news of an unannounced suitor from Venice, she already knows (and hopes) that it is Bassanio, saying “*Bassanio*, Lord Love, if thy will it be!” [See Appendix: *The Lottery*]

99. / Nor have I money, nor the extra goods

Try what my credit in Venice can do;<sup>o</sup> 100  
Let it be stretched<sup>o</sup> even to the utmost<sup>o</sup> 101  
To furnish<sup>o</sup> thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.  
Go and make inquiries<sup>o</sup>—and so will I—  
Secure the funds from wherever<sup>o</sup> you must,  
Based on my name, my credit, and my trust. 102

/ can bring you in Venice.  
{ That shall he racked } { uttermost }  
/ provide  
{ Go presently inquire }  
/ whomever

*Exeunt*

---

---

100. {Try what my credit can in Venice do.}

101. {That shall be racked, even to the uttermost}

**racked:** painfully stretched, as if on the rack. > Stretch my credit to the utmost; get every ducat you can.

102. {Where money is, and I no question make | To have it of my trust, or for my sake.}

**and I no question make:** a) and I am sure, I do not question it (that you will get the sums you seek, based upon my credit or my reputation); b) and I will not question (nor place restrictions upon) from where you get the money—get it from wherever you can

a) / Where money is: and I'm sure just the same, | You'll get it based on my credit or name

b) / Secure the funds from whomever you may | Based on my name, my worth, my trust to pay.

*Portia's house at Belmont. Enter Portia with her waiting-woman, Nerissa.*<sup>1</sup>

—Portia

By my word,<sup>2</sup> Nerissa, this little<sup>3</sup> body is awearry of this great world.

—Nerissa

You would be, sweet<sup>o</sup> madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as<sup>4</sup> your good fortunes. And yet, for all<sup>o</sup> I see, those who live in excess are as sick as those who starve with too little.<sup>5</sup> It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean.<sup>6</sup> Excess is soon accompanied by gray<sup>o</sup> hairs, while moderation<sup>o</sup> brings longer life.<sup>o 7 8</sup>

—Portia

Fine words and well-delivered.<sup>9</sup>

—Nerissa

They would be better if well-followed.

—Portia

---

1. The name *Nerissa* is derived from the Italian root, *ner*, which means dark, thus suggesting that Nerissa has dark hair or a dark complexion, while Portia's complexion is fair and her hair is blond. A waiting-woman is different from a maid: she is not a servant, and she can marry whomever she chooses. Hence, Nerissa plays the part of a facilitator and confidant for Portia rather than a servant.

2. {by my troth} In truth / I tell you truly / In faith

3. **little body**: a figure of speech which implies that the body is small or frail in comparison to the 'great world' (rather than implying a body that is small in comparison to other bodies).

4. / in equal measure to

5. {they are as sick that surfeit too much as they that starve with nothing}

**surfeit too much**: live in excess, have too much, over-indulge, indulge in too much

**starve with nothing**: have nothing, (have too little food).

6. Therefore, the means to happiness is to be seated in the mean

> A large amount of happiness, therefore, comes to one who is positioned in the middle, between the extremes of life.

**mean**: meager, medium, small, middle-of-the road

**no mean happiness**: no meager happiness; no medium happiness; great happiness

/ There is much happiness, therefore, to sit between too much and too little.

/ Therefore, the means to happiness is to be seated in the mean.

7. {Superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer}

/ Excess makes you old before your time, while moderation allows you to live longer.

8. **sweet**: dear / fine **all**: {ought} **indulge**: {surfeit} / glut / stuff themselves

**gray hairs**: {white hairs} > rapid aging, aging before one's time

**moderation**: {competency} / sufficiency / having what you need

**brings longer life**: {lives longer}

9. {Good sentences and well-pronounced}

**sentences**: sayings, sentiments, teachings

**well-delivered**: well-spoken

If to do good were as easy as to know what were good to do,<sup>10</sup> <then over-flowing of charity would turn> chapels into churches<sup>11</sup> and poor men's cottages into princely palaces.<sup>12</sup> It is a good preacher who follows his own sermon.<sup>13</sup> I could easier teach twenty others what were good to be done than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. <...> The brain may devise<sup>o</sup> laws to control one's passion<sup>o</sup> but hot desire<sup>14</sup> leaps o'er a cold decree. Such a hare is folly<sup>o</sup>—the youth—that skips o'er the traps<sup>o</sup> of good counsel—the cripple.<sup>15</sup> But all this philosophy is not going to find me a husband of my choosing.<sup>16</sup> O me, the word, *choose*: I may neither chose whom I would,<sup>o</sup> nor refuse whom I dislike.<sup>17</sup> So is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that there is none I can chose nor none I can refuse?<sup>18 19</sup>

—Nerissa

Your father was ever-virtuous,<sup>o</sup> and holy men nearing death have good inspirations.<sup>o</sup> Therefore, the lott'ry<sup>o</sup> that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, wherein the one who solves the riddle and chooses the right chest,<sup>o</sup> and thereby chooses you, will no doubt, never be chosen rightly

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10. The sense here is that if doing good were as easy as knowing what were good to do—which it is not—than everyone would be doing good deeds, such as going to church and giving to the poor.

11. {chapels had been churches} / chapels would become churches

12. / . . . to | hold all the worshipers | chapels would become churches; [as result of all those who gave in charity] poor men's cottages would become princes' palaces. [See Additional Notes, 1.2.25]

The images of this passage could be interpreted metaphorically (as opposed to literally). Hence: If to do good were as easy as to know what were good to do, then everyone would do good (and practice what they preach); by such truthful and honest actions, a meager person (a chapel) would become a person of great spiritual standing (a church) and a poor person (living in a poor man's cottage) would become princely (living in a princely palace).

13. {It is a good divine that follows his own instruction}

14. {a hot temper} / rash impulses / heated passion

15. {such a hare is madness, the youth, to skip over the meshes of good counsel, the cripple}

/ Such a rabbit is rashness, the youth, which jumps over the traps of good counsel, the cripple.

/ The rashness of youth is such a hare, that jumps over good counsel like a netted trap.

16. {But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband}

/ But all this philosophy is not of any use in my choosing a husband.

**not in the fashion:** of no use (in helping me chose a husband according to my wishes); not the way I am allowed to choose a husband. In sum, there is nothing Portia can do chose a husband, it all depends upon the test that her father devised. All of her wisdom, charm, and reasoning is of no use (*not in the fashion*) in helping her choose a husband—because the chose is not her own.

17. {I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike}

/ I may neither choose whom I want, nor refuse whom I don't want

18. {that I cannot chose one nor refuse none?}

**I cannot choose:** Portia is powerlessness; she cannot choose; she is bound by her father's conditions and yet—unlike the submissive fairy-tale princess—she is complaining about these fairy-tale conditions in a real way, secretly wishing there was something she could do to alter the situation. [See Additional Notes, 1.2.26]

19. **chapels would be:** {chapels had been}

**devise:** / come up with / think up / contrive / produce / invent

**to control one's passion:** {for the blood} / to keep the emotions in check

**that skips o'er the traps:** {to skip o'er the meshes} / jumps o'er the netted traps

**philosophy:** {reasoning} / philosophizing / logic

**not in fashion:** / not of any use    **I would:** / I like    **none:** / the other

by one whom you shall not rightly love.<sup>20</sup> But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that have already come?<sup>o 21</sup>

—Portia

I pray thee, name them once again;<sup>o</sup> and as thou namest them, I shall describe them, and, in accord with my description, level <a guess> at my affection.<sup>22</sup> {overname them}

—Nerissa

First there is the Neapolitan prince.<sup>o 2</sup> / prince from Naples.

—Portia

Ay, there's a colt<sup>o</sup> indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he counts it a great appropriation to<sup>o</sup> his own good parts<sup>o24</sup> that he can shoe the horse himself.<sup>25</sup> I am much afeard, my lady, that his mother had a good ride upon the blacksmith!<sup>26 27</sup>

—Neriss

Then there is the Count Palatine.

—Portia

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20. {whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you; will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who you shall love rightly.} / Whereof, the one who chooses the right chest, in accordance with the meaning of its inscription, wins you.

**his meaning:** your father's meaning—i.e., the right chest, according to the meaning of its inscription.

**meaning:** the right chest according to the inscription on it

Nerissa is saying that the one who chooses the right chest (and wins Portia) will be one whom Portia rightly loves (and not necessarily the one who rightly loves Portia). Hence, the outcome of the lottery would be the same as if Portia had made her own choice—as she would chose herself a husband whom she rightly loved. So, the intent of the lottery is to deliver to Portia a man whom she truly loves—based upon the premise that she cannot make the choice through her own wits. Here Nerissa is assuring Portia of a positive and desired outcome of the lottery-contest in obeisance to her father's wisdom—yet, it appears, that neither Portia nor Nerissa have real faith in this method.

Later, we see, that Portia comes to rightly love Bassanio and thus she wishes that he choses the right casket—which he does. That side of the story is clear. The reverse position, however, is not so certain: does Bassanio rightly love Portia, does he selflessly love her—or is his chief aim to win her wealth.

21. **ever virtuous:** / a man of great virtue **nearing death:** {at their death}/ on their deathbed

**good inspirations:** / are well-inspired. **lott'ry:** / lottery / contest / drawing

**chooses the right chest:** {chooses his meaning} / chooses the right chest (according to the meaning of its inscription)

**already come:** / since arrived?

22. {according to my description level at my affection.}

**level at:** guess at, infer, point to . . . the level of my response will be equal to—and on the same level as—my affection.

24. / he counts it as some great virtue

25. {and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself.}

/ and he calls attention to his own good breeding that he can shoe the horse himself

/ and he is quick to endorse (/commend) his own talent in that he can shoe the horse himself

/ and he claims himself worthy of some prize (/commendation) in that he can shoe the horse himself.

26. {his mother played false with a smith}

/ his mother fooled 'round with a blacksmith / his mother had a long ride on the blacksmith

In this rather bawdy remark, Portia is saying that he loves horses, and is able to shoe his own horse, because his mother (*played false with*) slept with a blacksmith behind his father's back; thus his father was a blacksmith and not a nobleman.

27. **colt:** unruly youth **good parts:** / talent / qualities / virtue

**appropriation to:** / addition to / endorsement of / a prize of / a trophy to / a testament of / 'a blue ribbon' to

He does nothing but frown ⟨all day⟩, as if to say: ‘You would rather not have me choose.’<sup>28</sup> ⟨He courts sadness and that is what he finds.⟩ He hears a merry tale yet does not smile. I fear he will prove ⟨himself to be⟩<sup>o</sup> the weeping philosopher<sup>29</sup> when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly<sup>o</sup> sadness in his youth.<sup>30</sup> I would rather be married to a skull with a bone in its mouth than to either of these. God protect<sup>o</sup> me from these two!<sup>31 32</sup>

—Nerissa

What<sup>o</sup> say you of<sup>33</sup> the French lord, Monsieur le Bon?

{How}

—Portia

God made him so, therefore, let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but he!—why he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan’s and a frown more formidable than the Count Palantine.<sup>34</sup> As he is no one, he tries to be everyone.<sup>35 36</sup> At the song of a sparrow, he dances straight-away like a puppet.<sup>37</sup> Afraid of his own shadow, he draws a sword to fight with it.<sup>38</sup> If I should marry him, I’d have to marry twenty of him to have one husband. If he would reject<sup>o</sup> me I would return the favor;<sup>o</sup> but should he fall madly in love with me, that I shall never requite.<sup>39 40</sup>

—Nerissa

What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

—Portia

You know I say nothing *to* him, for he understands me not, nor I him. He speaks<sup>o</sup> neither Latin, French, nor Italian; and, as you would swear in court, I have a poor penny’s worth of English.

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28. {He doth nothing but frown, as who should say, ‘And you will not have me choose.’  
/ as if to say, ‘I know you don’t want *me* to choose.’}

29. **the weeping philosopher:** refers to Heraclitus, who lived about 500 B.C., and was known to weep at the sad condition of humanity

30. / so besieged by the sadness of his youth / entombed in sadness from his early youth / so inclined to sadness since his youth.

31. {I’d rather be married to a death’s-head with a bone in his mouth} > I’d rather be dead

32. **unmannerly:** unfortunate / unbecoming / misappropriated / unbridled / unseemly > not fit for a youth

**prove ⟨himself to be⟩:** {prove} / prove ⟨himself⟩: / prove ⟨to be⟩

**protect:** {defend} / rescue / save

33. /What do you think of

34. {a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine}

35. {He is every man in no man.} / As he is no one (in himself), he must try to be everyone else. / He seems to be everyone but himself.

This line is open to several interpretations: a) as he is no one (having no character of his own) he tries to be like everyone else, to take on the traits and characteristics of those around him; b) as he is no one (and feeling inferior to those around him) he tries to impress and to look better than everyone—more of a horseman than the Neapolitan, more of a sad character than the Count. [See Additional Notes, 1.2.58]

36. Add line: ⟨ But what sort of man does this make him? ⟩ / ⟨But what manner of man is he?⟩

37. {If a trassell sing, he falls straight a cap’ring}

**trassell:** / throstle / thrush **falls straight:** begins straight away / starts right away

**a cap’ring :** merrily jumping about, gayly dancing, frolicking // convulsing in fright

/ he suddenly convulses with fear / he immediately begins shaking / he straight away begins to dance.

The exact meaning of *a cap’ring* is unclear. It could mean a) that the moment he hears the sound of a bird he begins to dance about, suggesting that he is like a puppet and dances to everyone else’s tune—but not his own. (It could also be that he is so eager to show off his dancing skills, that the moment a bird sings he will take that as his opportunity to dance); b) when he hears the song of a bird, a throstle sing, he falls to the ground in a frenzy—so lacking in manhood and courage that even the sound of bird can cause him to shiver in fright.

38. {He will fence with his own shadow}

> The possible implication of this image is that his shadow is as real as he and/or that he is afraid of his own shadow.

39. {for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.}

40. **a-shaking:** {a cap’ring} / cowers / shivers / convulses **fence:** / duel / battle / do battle

**reject:** {despise} **return the favor:** {forgive him} / give him the same

He is the picture of a proper man—but alas, who can converse with a picture?<sup>41</sup> And how oddly he is suited! I think he got<sup>o</sup> his jacket<sup>42</sup> in Italy, his stockings<sup>o</sup> in France, his round hat<sup>o</sup> in Germany, and his behavior from who knows where?<sup>43 44</sup>

45

—Nerissa

How do you like the young German, nephew to the Duke of Saxony?

—Portia

With much vile<sup>47</sup> in the morning when he is sober; and with great vile<sup>48</sup> in the afternoon when he is drunk. When he is best, he is a little worse than a man; and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast. Should the worst fate that ever fell, now fall, (and I ne'er see his face again), I hope I shall make do<sup>49</sup> to live<sup>o</sup> without him.

**to live:** {to go} / to go on living

—Nerissa

If he should decide<sup>o</sup> to choose, and should he choose the right casket—you would refuse to perform<sup>o</sup> your father's will should you refuse to accept him.

**decide:** {offer}

**perform:** / carry out

—Portia

( 'Tis a fate of which I am well aware. )<sup>50</sup> Therefore, for fear of the worst,<sup>51</sup> I pray thee set a full<sup>o</sup> glass of fine<sup>o</sup> wine on the contrary<sup>o</sup> casket; for if the devil be within, and that temptation without, I know he will chose it. I will do anything, Nerissa,<sup>52</sup> ere I will be married to a sponge.<sup>o 53</sup>

[ *Enter a Servingman; Nerissa meets with him. Servingman exits.* <sup>54</sup> ]

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41. {dumb-show} / pantomime / 'someone in a silent show'

42. {doublet} / suit (double-breasted suit) / vest / > referring to a tight-fitting upper-garment

43. {and his behaviour everywhere} / from who knows where.

> He procures his manners from all those around him, just like his clothes.

**behaviour:** manners / mannerisms / affection

Compare Greene, *Farewell to Follie* (1591): 'I have seen an English gentleman so diffused in his suits, his doublet being the wear of Castile, his hose from Venice, his hat from France, and his cloak from Germany.'

44. **speaks:** {hath} **got:** {bought} **stockings:** {round hose} / tights **round hat:** {bonnet}

45. Found here in the original is an obscure reference to a Scottish Lord. For the sake of brevity and clarity it has herein been deleted. [See Additional Notes, 1.2.75]

47. {very vilely} / with disgust / with much vile

48. {most vilely} / with loathing

49. **make do:** {make shift} / make the needed adjustments

50. / A thing of which I am too well aware.

51. / to prevent my worst fears from coming true

52. 'I will do anything,' says Portia—anything short of going directly against her father's will. In her playful suggestion that Nerissa dupe the German suitor into picking the wrong casket, Portia is expressing her unconscious wish that Nerissa somehow intervene (and rig the lottery such that Portia will end up with someone she truly loves). Nerissa, as a loyal servant, may feel the need to act upon this unspoken wish and alter the outcome of lottery in favor of Portia's choice (without Portia ever asking her to do so). Thus, Portia can have her wish *and* remain faithful to her father's will. We can infer from this passage that both Portia and Nerissa know which is the winning casket.

53. **full:** {deep} **white:** {Rhenish} > a fine, white German wine, superior to the common table wine, which is red **contrary:** / wrong **drunkard:** {sponge} / sop / one who soaks up liquor like a sponge

54. In the original, no Servant enters in to bring news (from the suitors) and Nerissa's next line reads: *You need not fear, lady, the having of any of these lords. They have acquainted me with their determinations, which is indeed to return to their home.* This indicates that the lords had informed Nerissa about their intention to leave before the scene opened.

One way to rectify this situation would be to have a Servant enter with the news of the suitors' departure.

[See Additional Notes, 1.2.96]

—Nerissa

You need not fear lady in having any of these lords. They have all come to the same decision,<sup>55</sup> which is indeed to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some means<sup>o</sup> other than your father's condition<sup>o</sup> of having to choose the right casket.<sup>56</sup>

**means:** {sort} / method    **condition:** {imposition} / imposed contest

—Portia

If I live a thousand years, as old as Sibylla,<sup>57</sup> I will die as chaste as Diana unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable<sup>58</sup> <in deciding to depart> for there is not one among them, whose very absence I do not dote upon—<sup>59</sup> and I pray God grant them a fair departure.<sup>60</sup>

—Nerissa

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in the company of Marquis of Montferrat?<sup>61</sup>

—Portia

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio—as I think so was he called.<sup>62</sup>

—Nerissa

True, madam. He, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the most<sup>o</sup> deserving of a fair<sup>o</sup> lady.

**most:** {best}    **fair:** beautiful

—Portia

I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

---

55. {they have acquainted me with their determinations}

With the entrance of a *Servant* to break the news to Nerissa, the pronoun 'me' would be removed, as the suitors have not stated their determination directly to Nerissa.

**acquainted me:** / apprised me of / told me of

**their determinations:** / what they have determined / what they've decided to do / their decision / their determined course of action

56. {than your father's imposition, depending on the caskets}

/ than your father's contest of having to choose the right casket.

**imposition:** condition, demand, imposed methodology

**depending on the caskets:** contingent upon the contest he devised (whereby a suitor must choose the right casket to win Portia).

57. {If I live to be as old as Sibylla} / If I live to be as old as <the prophetess> Sibylla

Sibylla was the prophetess of Cumae, and Apollo's lover. Apollo granted her as many years of life as the grains of sand she could hold in her hand. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 14.129-53

58. {are so reasonable}

**reasonable:** a) amicable, in that they are doing what Portia wants and leaving, b) swayed by reason; a true lover would not be reasonable and would take any risk to win his beloved

59. {there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence}

**dote upon:** {dote on} / take delight in / cherish / long for

60. Q1 = {and I pray God grant them a fair departure.} F1 = {and I wish them a fair departure.}

61. Here Nerissa 'tests the waters' to see if Portia favors Bassanio, as Nerissa assumes she does. Portia confirms her high opinion of Bassanio. (This confirmation lets Nerissa know that her plan to have Bassanio come to Belmont, and win Portia, is on target.)

Why does Nerissa even mention Bassanio—who is said to be a soldier and a scholar (which he is not)—when there is no hint that he would be a likely suitor? [See *Essays: The Lottery*]

62. {Yes, yes, it was Bassanio—as I think so was he called} Portia clearly recalls his name, with enthusiasm—but quickly tempers her feelings with a seeming uncertainty. The original, 'as I think so was he called' is a bit jumbled and confused, suggesting that she is not thinking straight and/or talking very quickly in order to mask her excitement.

*Enter a Servant*

63

—Servant

The four foreigners<sup>64</sup> seek for you, madam, to take their leave—and there is a messenger<sup>o</sup> come from<sup>o</sup> a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the Prince, his master, will be here tonight.

**messenger:** {forerunner} / herald **from:** / to announce

—Portia

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart<sup>65</sup> as I bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach. And if he has the temperament of a saint and the complexion of a devil,<sup>66</sup> I'd rather he hear me confess my strife than take me as a wife.<sup>67</sup>

Come now Nerissa, 'tis<sup>o</sup> just like before:<sup>68</sup> / it's / it is

Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer<sup>o</sup><sup>69</sup> / Whiles one suitor leaves to chance no more

Then comes<sup>o</sup> another<sup>o</sup> to knock at my door.<sup>71</sup> / Here comes // Another them comes

*Exeunt*

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63. The following line by Portia, which appears here in Q1 {How now! What news?} has been deleted: Most commentators hold that this line is superfluous and out of place: Portia is not likely to greet her servant in such a way. This line is omitted in F1.

If the *Servant* is made to enter before [line 96] then this short greeting might come as a result of Portia's surprise—and perhaps in slight apprehension that there is some additional news that is contrary to the good news previously delivered (which is that all the suitors intend to leave). If, however, this line is preserved (and if, the *Servant* had come once before) then Portia's line would read: 'How now, more news?'

64. {four strangers} Actually, six suitors are named in the original, and the mention of four is probably a remnant of an earlier draft. As discussed in a previous note, it is likely that the original scene had only four suitors, with the Englishman and Scottish suitors added in a later draft. Several references to *four* suitors—and a reference to a *fifth*, who comes after the *four*—are made by Portia.

One could rectify this discrepancy by a) changing all references to *four* to *six*, and the reference to a *fifth*, to a *seventh* (which is somewhat cumbersome); b) changing the references to *five* suitors and a *sixth* (and delete the Scottish suitor), or c) leaving the references as they are, to *four* (and delete the English and Scottish suitors). One could also leave the inaccurate references as they are, without harming to the text. In this version, five suitors are named yet the reference remains at four suitors—the implication could be that the French suitor is not extant enough to be counted as a suitor.

65. {with so good heart} /as whole-heartedly / with the same affection

66. {if he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil}

**condition:** /virtue / character / temperament / affection

**the complexion of:** / the dark color of / the dark skin of [See Additional Notes, 1.2.127]

67. {I had rather he should shrive me than wive me}

> If he has the dark complexion like the devil—and recall that fairness or lightness of skin was considered beautiful at the time—and the disposition of a saint, I would rather that he be my priest, and hear my confession (*shrive me*), than marry me (*wive me*). Hear we see that Portia is quick to judge by outer show, by what meets the eye, rather than the deeper meaning or character of a person.

**shrive me:** hear my confession, absolve me of my sins (as would a priest) > the precise meaning is uncertain

/ I had rather he absolve me of my sin, then wive me herein

68. {Come Nerissa, sirrah, go before}

**sirrah:** a term used to address someone of low standing, such as a servant, or a boy. To clarify this line, it is often emended as follows: "Come Nerissa. (*to Servant*) Sirrah, go before."

69. {Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer }

**wooer:** in the original, *wooer* may have rhymed with *before* and *door*, and provided for a triplicate rhyme scheme.

71. In the original, the meter of the rhyming lines is not in the standard iambic meter: the second line has nine syllables and the third, has seven. If a triplicate rhyme was intended, then the third line would contain nine syllables and could be emended as follows: 'Another suitor knocks at the door' or 'Another comes to knock at my door.'

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ACT ONE - Scene Three 1.3

*Venice. Enter Bassanio and Shylock.*

—Shylock

Three thousand ducats<sup>1</sup>—yes?<sup>2</sup>

{ well } / good / alright

—Bassanio

Ay sir, for three months.

—Shylock

For three months—yes?<sup>3</sup>

{ well } / good / alright

—Bassanio

For which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.<sup>4</sup>

—Shylock.

Antonio shall be<sup>5</sup> bound—yes?<sup>6</sup>

{ become } // { well } / good / alright

—Bassanio

Can you help me?<sup>4</sup> Will you do me this favor?<sup>5</sup> Shall I know your answer?<sup>6</sup>

—Shylock

Three thousand ducats, for three months, and Antonio bound.

—Bassanio

Your answer to that?

—Shylock

Antonio is a good man.

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1. **ducats:** (lit., ‘of the duke’); gold coins. These were first struck in Venice in the thirteenth century and came to signify a well-respected currency (such as the South African Kugerrand does today). Three thousand ducats, during that time, was an extremely large sum of money. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.1]

2. {Three thousand ducats, well}

**well:** good / alright / OK // yes? / is that right?

The repeated use of the term, ‘yes?’ or ‘good’ after each condition would be like a person going over a checklist and acknowledging that the stated condition is clear and understood—and agreed upon. If the term *good* is used, it would be spoken three times, in the same matter-of-fact style as one going over a checklist. The term *well*, which is found in the original, is an imprecise fit. Many productions, in trying to make the term *well* sound somewhat ‘natural,’ have added different inflections and tonalities to it; and instead of the term being repeated in the same way, with the same tone, each time the word {well} is intoned as a question, a note of surprise, a sense of disbelief, etc.

3. **shall be bound:** shall cover the loan, shall sign the bond

4. {May you stead me?} / Can you cover me? / Can you supply the money for me?

5. {Will you pleasure me?} / Will you meet my needs? / Will you please me with your reply? / Will you fulfill my request?

6. Shall you say, ‘yes?’ / Shall your answer be ‘yes?’ / What is your answer?

—Bassanio

Have you ever heard any imputation<sup>o</sup> to the contrary? / accusation / charge

—Shylock

Oh, no, no, no, no. What I mean in saying, ‘he is a good man’ is to have you understand that he is sufficient (to cover the loan). Yet his means<sup>o</sup> are in question.<sup>o</sup> He hath an argosy<sup>o</sup> bound for Tripolis,<sup>o</sup> another to the Indies. I understand, moreover, from word on<sup>7</sup> the Rialto<sup>o</sup> he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath scattered about.<sup>8 9</sup> Yet ships are but boards, sailors but men. There be land rats and water rats, land thieves and water thieves—I mean pi-rates.<sup>10</sup> And then there is the peril of the water, wind, and rocks. The man is nonetheless sufficient.<sup>11</sup> Three thousand ducats—I think I may take his bond.<sup>12</sup>

—Bassanio

Be assured you may.<sup>o</sup> / With assurance you may

—Shylock

I will be assured I may; and that I may be assured, I will think it over.<sup>13</sup> May I speak with Antonio? <sup>14</sup>

—Bassanio

If it please you to<sup>o</sup> dine with us. / come

—Shylock

Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the swine which your prophet, the Nazarite, conjured the devil

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7. {upon} / from news on / as heard upon / upon word at

8. {squandered abroad} / extended abroad / flung about / at risk in foreign waters / ‘scattered recklessly’ (Onions). *Squander* in this context does not carry the negative connotation of being ‘wasteful’ but pertains more to a sense of ‘over-reaching.’

9. There is no factual accuracy in this description, as no merchant of Venice would have such a varied range of ventures. This long description serves to show Antonio’s standing as a grand merchant, and also to show that Shylock is well aware of everything concerning Antonio and his ventures.

10. The original reads {there be land rats and water rats, water thieves and land thieves—I mean pirates.} *Pirates* may be a ‘bad’ pun for *pier-rats*, which would indicate the rats which run about the pier and steal food. In this emendation the terms *land thieves* and *water thieves* have been reversed. With this new order the term *pirates* is clearly related to *water-thieves*. (The pun on pirates could also be made by the following word order: “There be land rats and land thieves, water rats and water thieves—I mean pirates.” In some productions the term *pirates* is pronounced as *pi-rats*. The reason for this emphasis is uncertain but it may be a word play on “water rats.” It could also indicate “pie-rats,” i.e., petty thieves who steal crumbs (as rats steal the crumbs from pies).

11. **is sufficient:** has adequate wealth (and means) to cover the debt

12. **his means:** his business, his ventures, his means of making money

**in question:** {in supposition} / in doubt / questionable

**an argosy:** a merchant ship    **Tripolis:** a port in Libya or Lebanon    **Rialto:** merchant exchange in Venice

**nonetheless:** {notwithstanding} / nevertheless / despite all that

13. {I will bethink me}

14. Shylock already knows Antonio’s store and need not think it over {*I will bethink me*} to be assured; nor does he need to discuss anything with Antonio to be assured. As we will see, none of the subsequent conversation with Antonio lead’s to Shylock’s further assurance as he never once asks Antonio about the state of his ventures (or other collateral that Antonio may have). Shylock is using this notion of needing to be assured as a rouse whereby he can speak directly with Antonio both from a position of equals and from the position of superiority, where Antonio needs his help. Shylock is taking this rare opportunity of engagement to confront Antonio about personal matters—such as Antonio’s mistreatment of Shylock.

into.<sup>15</sup> I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so forth<sup>o</sup>—but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. [What news on the Rialto.<sup>16</sup>] Who is he comes here?<sup>17</sup>

*Enter Antonio*

—Bassanio  
This is Signior Antonio.

[*Bassanio goes over to Antonio and they converse in private.*]<sup>18</sup>

—Shylock [*aside*]

How like a fawning<sup>o</sup> innkeeper<sup>o</sup> he looks<sup>o</sup> <sup>19</sup> / slavish // {publican}  
<Ever so keen to be of humble service.><sup>o</sup> / Ever so willing to help those is need  
How I despise his meddling<sup>o</sup> Christian virtue<sup>22</sup> / holy / feignèd

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15. Sometimes this line is staged as an ‘aside,’ rather than a direct comment (and insult) to Bassanio. Reference is to Jesus of Nazareth who conjured a demon out of two men and cast it into a herd of pigs (Matthew 8:28-33); or to the story where Jesus cast out unclean spirits from a man named Legion into a herd of pigs (Mark 5:1-13). In both stories the bedeviled pigs were driven off a cliff into the sea.

16. In Q1, this line appears as follows: {What news on the Rialto, who is he comes here?} Most editions punctuate it as follows: “What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?”

Shylock could not be asking Bassanio about news on the Rialto since Bassanio has no knowledge of what is happening there. It could be that Shylock is asking this question to himself. Or, in a possible staging, Shylock could see a fellow merchant and instinctively ask him about news on the Rialto—and then notice Antonio’s arrival. This, however, would require the scene to be staged in a market with additional characters on stage. But, is this really a question that Shylock asks? Perhaps not. The preferred option, then, would be to treat this line as an exclamatory statement not a question. When Shylock sees Antonio he says something to the effect of: “What great news (on the Rialto)! Here comes Antonio.” If, however, none of these options work, and the line is seen as being too obscure and confusing, it could simply be deleted.

17. **swine:** / pigs {habitation} > dwelling place **so forth:** {following}

18. Bassanio is likely unaware of Antonio’s hatred of Shylock and all the railing he has done against Shylock over the years. We know that Antonio despises usurers and here, through necessity, we find him thrust into a usurer’s domain. Antonio cannot be pleased with the situation yet, for the love of his friend, he is willing to endure this unfortunate convergence. (Without understanding Antonio’s hatred of usury—and now seeing him thrust into the liar of one whose practice he despises—the scene would fail to hold the tension that was intended by the author, a tension surely felt and understood by an Elizabethan audience.)

19. {How like a fawning publican he looks} / How like a slavish innkeeper he looks  
/ How like an over-eager servant<sup>o</sup> he looks / inn-keeper

**fawning:** humble, cowering, accommodating, obsequious

**publican:** innkeeper, ‘pub’-keeper. Sharing similar roots with: *pub* and *public*.

A *fawning publican* refers to an obsequious and ‘ever-ready-to-serve’ inn- or bar-keeper. The image here is that of Antonio, the well-respected ‘royal merchant’ who now looks like a lowly innkeeper ready to accommodate the needs of his friend. There is something about this all-too-willing posture that is alien to Shylock and both offends and threatens his concept of life. A publican could also be a reference to those who served as tax-collectors for the Romans [Luke 18:9-14]—and in so doing oppressed the Jews, but this is a more remote possibility. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.38]

22. {I hate him for he is a Christian}

This is a highly controversial line which, as it stands, seems to portray Shylock as a Christian-hater. What Shylock hates is not Christians per se but something about Antonio and his Christian charity, which undermines Shylock’s business.

Some productions, in trying to put forth a pro-Shylock sentiment, delete this line (and the entire section), and preserve only the first line, {How like a fawning publican he looks}. When this line about Shylock’s hatred is taken at face value (and without the reasons offered by Shylock in later lines) it might suggest that Shylock hates Antonio for no other reason than his being Christian—which is clearly not the case. (Shylock makes no such negative comment about Bassanio or any other Christian—nor has reason to.) Shylock hates something about Antonio’s version and practice of Christianity (especially as it interferes with Shylock’s business) but also, personally, as Antonio rails at Shylock (where the merchants meet) and spits on him and calls him a dog.. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.39]

But more, for that in<sup>o</sup> low simplicity,<sup>o</sup> 23 / for in his // simple-mindedness  
 He lends out money gratis and brings down  
 The rate of usance<sup>o</sup> here with us in Venice. 24 / interest  
 If I can gain an upper hand but once {If I can catch him once upon the hip} 25  
 I will feed fat<sup>o</sup>26 the ancient grudge I bear him. / exploit / I'll gratify  
 He hates our sacred nation; and even  
 Where merchants most do congregate<sup>o</sup> he rails / meet to do business  
 On me, my contracts,<sup>o</sup> and my well-won profit,<sup>o</sup> {bargains} / business // well-earned {thrift} 27  
 Which he calls, *usury*. Cursèd be my tribe 28  
 If I forgive him.

[*Bassanio returns while Antonio hesitates, coming over after a brief pause.*]

—Bassanio Shylock, do you hear?

—Shylock

I am considering<sup>o</sup> my present store, {debating of} / consid'ring of  
 And by the near<sup>o</sup> guess of my memory, / rough  
 I cannot instantly raise up<sup>o</sup> the gross<sup>o</sup> / acquire / obtain // the sum  
 Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?<sup>o</sup> / What to do?

23. {But more, for in low simplicity} / But more his simple-minded view, wherein

**low simplicity:** naivety and ignorance

24. **rate of usance:** the profit that can be gained from usuance, especially as it relates to exacting large penalties from a forfeited bond. This is not the same as bringing down the rate of interest.

The sense here is that Shylock hates something about Antonio's version of Christianity, and his Christian actions, where he is quick to loan out money, without interest, to those in need; this action cuts into Shylock's profits. "Bringing down the rate of usance" is not the same as "bringing down the rate of interest." Shylock biggest complaint is not that Antonio brings down the interest rate but that Antonio brings down the value of Shylock's usance. He does this in two ways: he lends out money, gratis, and thereby deprives Shylock of potential customers, but more so he loans out money, gratis, so people do not forfeit the bond they made with Shylock and thereby avoid paying the exorbitant fine—which often results in the forfeit of all their goods.

25. **catch him upon the hip:** a wrestling term that means to grab hold of or gain advantage over one's opponent; to be in a superior position.

26. **feed fat:** indulge in, stuff oneself Shylock is hoping to find a way to entrap Antonio, to gain an advantage over him, then to use that position of power to exploit or "feed fat" his long-standing resentment, i.e., finally get some revenge. *Feeding fat* indicates that Shylock will take delight in, and indulge in, his position of power, or advantage, over Antonio and the revenge he exacts.

What exactly is Shylock's plan to 'catch Antonio upon the hip' and gain an advantage over him?—allowing him (Shylock) to "feed fat" his ancient grudge? It is possible that Shylock's hope for gaining an 'advantage' over Antonio would be in having him sign a bond with humiliating terms. The idea of Antonio defaulting on the loan is possible, but a long shot, and not likely to be part of Shylock's initial plan. Shylock's initial intention may have been to humiliate Antonio and to put him at a moral disadvantage; and this later turned more sinister with the betrayal of Shylock's daughter and Antonio's unexpected losses.

27. **well-won thrift:** Shylock couches his ruinous practice of usury as 'thrift.'

28. **Which he calls usury:** which Antonio views as thievery, exploitation, the devil's work, etc. Shylock is defending his business and profits {thrift} as being well-earned and justifiable.

**Cursèd be my tribe | If I forgive him:**

Shylock is invoking something larger than himself in his effort to reinforce his resolve to enact some kind of revenge on Antonio. Here he lays the curse upon his tribe (not himself) should he forgive Antonio. By cursing his tribe (the nation of Jews) Shylock may be implying that Antonio's hatred of usury is the same as his hatred of Judaism, but this is not the case. This statement may not be directed toward Shylock's tribe but may be seen as a general exclamation akin to "Cursed be God if I forgive him" or "God be damned if I forgive him."

Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,<sup>29</sup>  
 Will furnish me. But wait!° How many months {soft}  
 Do you desire?<sup>30</sup> [*To Antonio*] Rest you fair, good signior  
 Your worship was the last man in our mouths.°<sup>31</sup> / on our breath

—Antonio  
 Shylock, although° I neither lend nor borrow {albeit}  
 By taking nor by giving with interest° {of excess}  
 Yet to supply the ripe° needs° of my friend / ready / pressing / urgent {wants}  
 I'll break a custom.<sup>32 33</sup> [*to Bas.*] Does he know the amount,° {Is he yet possessed}  
 How much you want?

—Shylock                    Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

—Antonio  
 And for three months.

—Shylock  
 I had forgot—three months. [*to Bassanio*] You told me so.<sup>34</sup>  
 Well then, your bond. And let me see. . . ° But hear you: / and now the rate  
 Methought° you said you neither lend nor borrow / I thought  
 On sums that bear interest.° {upon advantage}

—Antonio                    I never do.° {I never use it} > engage in such activity

—Shylock  
 When Jacob grazed° his uncle Laban's sheep / tended

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**29. Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe:**

Shylock only mentions Tubal and expresses doubt about having the full sum after he sees Antonio enter. Here he is simply stalling, waiting for Antonio to come over. (Once Antonio agrees to the terms of the bond, we hear that Shylock is going to *purse the ducats straight* [171] which suggests that he had ample store from the beginning.)

30. Shylock knows full well that the bond is for three months, as he has already stated it twice. Again, he is just stalling, waiting for Antonio.

31. Shylock's words are most gracious, generously welcoming of Antonio, and appear to be a true offer of friendship—which Antonio is now inclined (or obligated) to accept since he is in need of Shylock's help. Yet Antonio may see this overtly warm welcome as just another usurer's rouse, a pretense of friendship only offered to gain an advantage. Hence, Antonio neither accepts the welcome nor returns it. Antonio refuses to befriend a usurer. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.57]

32. / I'll break a custom to supply the ripe | Wants of my friend.

33. Antonio's first words to Shylock—without even so much as a greeting—are an outright rejection of Shylock and his business. Antonio is in need of Shylock's money yet Antonio wants to make it clear, from the onset, that he is doing this out of duress, as an exception—and still upholds his harsh opinion of usury. Shylock, of course, is ready to expose, and use Antonio's predicament to his advantage, to entrap Antonio.

34. Shylock definitely did not forget that the term of the bond was for three months. He is again stalling. He wants to get back to the real issue, which his opportunity to confront Antonio.

He then was third in line from Abraham—<sup>35</sup>  
This, his wise mother, had deftly arranged;  
The third possessor—ay, he was the third.<sup>o</sup> <sup>36</sup>

{ wrought in his behalf }  
/ and so he was.

—Antonio

And what of it<sup>o</sup>? Did he take interest?

{ him }

—Shylock

No, not directly—hear what Jacob did:

He first agreed with Laban, that for earnings,<sup>o</sup>

/ payment

He could have<sup>o</sup> all the sheep born marked<sup>o</sup> or spotted.

/ He would receive { pied }

‘Tis known,<sup>o</sup> whatever a ewe sees when mating<sup>37</sup>

/ Now then

That’s what her newborn will come to resemble.<sup>o</sup>

Autumn<sup>o</sup> had come; it was the time for breeding.

/ The fall

So Jacob peeled off the bark from some sticks

And when the work of generations was

Between these wooly breeders in the act

He put the branches in front of the ewes.

In spring they conceived lambs that were spotted

And all the offspring rightly went to Jacob.<sup>38</sup>

This was the way he thrived, and he was blessed;

And thrift is blessing if men steal it not.<sup>39</sup>

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35. **Abram:** Abraham. The Author uses the original name, *Abram*, which means ‘exalted father’ rather than *Abraham* which means, ‘father of many nations,’ because the biblical account he refers to uses the name Abram, not Abraham. Abram received the name Abraham from God when he was 99 years old.

36. { This Jacob from our holy Abram was, | As his wise mother wrought in his behalf, | The third possessor; ay, he was the third } Jacob was made third in line through the cleverness (and deception) of his mother, Rebecca, who substituted Jacob for Esau, her elder son, so that Jacob would receive Isaac’s blessing and inheritance (making him third in line from Abraham) rather than Esau, who rightly deserved it. (This deception is what Shylock calls a ‘wise’ action.) Shylock is thus justifying his deceptive practice of usury by citing a Biblical precedence of deception. Shylock then goes on to tell how Jacob deceived Laban and thereby prospered. Both stories are used by Shylock to justify his deceptive practice of usury, which he calls ‘thrift’ and ‘blessing.’ Antonio does not “buy” this explanation; to the contrary, he is appalled at the way Shylock misquotes and abuses scripture in support of his own immoral practices. [See Additional Note, 1.3.71]

37. / He first agreed with Laban that all sheep

Found pied or spotted,<sup>o</sup> Jacob, for his earnings, / born with streaks or spots

Could keep. What e’er a ewe sees when she mates

38. Shylock cites this story in support of Jacob’s wise actions which allowed him to prosper. Antonio says that the spots were brought about by ‘the hand of heaven’—in accordance with divine dispensation (impelled by Jacob’s purity and faith). This was done so that Jacob could prosper after having been deceived by Laban.

39. { And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not. } Shylock is again using the euphemistic term “thrift” [see note 27] to justify his harmful practice of usury.

/ Such thrift is seen as a blessing, if men | Gain it through cleverness and not through theft.

—Antonio

40

This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for,<sup>41</sup>  
A thing not in his power to bring to pass  
But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven<sup>42</sup>  
<Which naturally allows all creatures<sup>o</sup> to breed—  
The same of which does not apply to gold.<sup>o</sup>><sup>43</sup>  
Was this inserted<sup>o</sup> to justify usury?<sup>44</sup>  
Or is your gold and wealth<sup>o</sup> like Jacob's sheep?<sup>45</sup>

/ Which allows all creatures to reproduce  
/ money  
/ Was this a story / Did you tell this  
/ Or are your golden coin

—Shylock

I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast.  
But hear<sup>o</sup> me, signor—<sup>46</sup>

{note}

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40. A line could be added here: <Your story tells of human trickery:> This line would show that Shylock's version of the story is based upon that which pertains to human deception not the hand of God.

41. {Such was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for}

Here Antonio is pointing out that Jacob worked for the sheep, that he earned them from the sweat of his brow (both in tending the sheep and serving his uncle). The part of the story that Shylock and Antonio shy away from—including the prelude story where Jacob deceives Isaac and gains his land—is that Jacob used deception to gain Laban's sheep.

42. {A thing not in his power to bring to pass | But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven.}

**swayed:** determined, directed, shaped

**fashioned:** brought about, created, produced

**the hand of heaven:** God

Such 'a thing'—i.e., the creation and reproduction of life— is only in the power of God to bring to pass. As such, the reproduction of money is unnatural and contrary to the natural laws of God, and what God brings to pass. Thus, Antonio is refuting Shylock's story (and its justification for his business) on two accounts: a) that Jacob earned the money by working for it, and b) that the hand of heaven—not Jacob's own power and skill—allowed Jacob to prosper through the power by which animals naturally reproduce. Antonio is saying that the reproduction of money—where money reproduces on its own, through the charging of interest on a loan—is unnatural, Godless, and cannot be compared to Jacob's venture. (Some scholars argue that this also goes against Jewish law in that the money earns interest, or "creates," on the Sabbath).

43. <For living creatures are sanctioned by God | To breed—and such does not apply to gold.>

<Which allows creatures to naturally breed— | Such laws as these do not apply to money.>

[See Additional Notes, 1.3.90]

44. {Was this inserted to make interest good?} / Was this a story in defense (/support) of usury?

**was this inserted:** was this story, this biblical reference inserted into our conversation

**interest:** Antonio uses the term *interest* (which means the practice of loaning out money which carries interest) but he is using it to implicate the practice of usury—a practice that involves loaning out money with interest but, more villainously, this loan often involved a stiff penalty or forfeiture if the loan is not repaid in time; and this whole practice also involves some measure of deception, exploitation, and entrapment. Usury is something far more nefarious than the simple loaning out money with interest. We see this displayed in the bond that Antonio made with Shylock where, as it turns out, Antonio had to pay with his life as a forfeiture on the loan.

45. {Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?} / Or does your gold and silver breed like sheep?

This relates to the Augustinian argument (previously invoked by Antonio) that the loaning of money, which bears interest, is an unnatural act and goes against God's law since only living things have God's sanction to reproduce. Loaning money which bears interest causes barren metal (gold and silver) to breed like living things.

46. What was Shylock going to say before he was interrupted? Clearly he is derailed by Antonio's harsh comments—or perhaps by some extraneous distraction, such as the knocking over of some money or some paper on his table. In the next line Shylock composes himself by stating something obvious and bland {Three thousand ducats, 'tis a nice round sum} then he regains his previous line of thought—where he expresses his deep resentment at the way Antonio has treated him. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.93]



For sufferance is the badge<sup>o</sup> of all my people.<sup>o</sup> 52 / mark, sign > hallmark {tribe}  
 You call me misbeliever,<sup>53</sup> cut-throat,<sup>54</sup> dog,  
 And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,  
 And all for use of that which is mine own.  
 Well then,<sup>o</sup> it now appears you need my help— / Well, well  
 To hell with that!<sup>o</sup> 55 You come to me and say: / Well spit on that!  
 ‘Shylock, we wish for<sup>o</sup> monies.’<sup>o</sup> You say so— {would have} / need some  
 You that did void your rheum<sup>o</sup> upon my beard<sup>o</sup> / spit // face  
 And kick me as you’d spurn a worthless dog<sup>o</sup> {stranger cur} / ling’ring dog  
 Over your doorway.<sup>o</sup> Now you ask for money: 56 {over your threshold}  
 What should I say to you? Should I not say,  
 ‘Hath a dog money? Is it possible  
 A cur<sup>o</sup> can lend three thousand ducats?’ Or / dog / mutt  
 Shall I bend low, and in a servant’s voice,<sup>o</sup> 57 / lowly tone  
 With bated breath and whimpering<sup>o</sup> humbleness, 58 / whispering  
 Say this: ‘Fair<sup>o</sup> sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last— / kind  
 You spurned me such a day. Another time  
 You called me ‘dog’—and for these courtesies  
 I’ll lend you thus much monies?’

—Antonio  
 I am as like<sup>o</sup> to call thee so again, / And I am wont

52. {For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe}

**suff’rance:** forbearance, patient endurance (of abuse), long-suffering.

**the badge of our tribe:** refers to the distinguishing trait of Jews which is their ability to endure the hardship piled upon them by Christian oppression. It could also refer to the *badge*, a distinguishing yellow ‘O,’ that Venetian Jews were compelled to wear. In 1.3, the term *tribe*, designating the nation of Jews, is used by Shylock three times: cursèd be my *tribe* [1.3.48]; a wealthy Hebrew of my *tribe* [1.3.54]; sufferance is the badge of our *tribe* [1.3.107]. The term, however, is odd and it is unlikely that a Jew would refer to the nation of Jews by that term.

53. **misbeliever:** infidel; one who believes in a mistaken God or path to salvation—as opposed to a ‘disbeliever’ which refers to one who has no belief in God.

54. **cut-throat:** one who cuts the throat of others, a murderer. The terms would refer to the usurer who cuts the throat of, or kills, the livelihood of others.

55. {Go to, then; you come to me and you say}

**go to:** an expression of annoyance and disbelief which, in some cases, could mean something like ‘go to hell.’ It could be more vaguely, and less forcefully, expressed as: ‘come on now,’ ‘you must be kidding,’ or ‘what’s up with that?’ The forceful expression of ‘go to hell’ (or ‘get lost’) serves to prompt Antonio into anger, into a storm—which works to Shylock’s advantage—whereas ‘go to, then’ ‘come on now,’ is less prompting in its effect.

56. {Over your threshold, monies is your suit.} / Outside your house; now money is your suit.

57. {in a bondman’s key}

**bondman’s key:** sounding like, with the voice of, in the feeble tone of a serf or servant (bondman).

58. / With a gentle breath and a humble whisper

To spit on thee again, to spurn thee, too.<sup>59 60</sup>  
 If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not<sup>o</sup> / don't lend it  
 As to thy friend—for when did friendship make<sup>o</sup> {take}  
 Profit<sup>o</sup> on barren metal,<sup>61</sup> <breeding it / Interest  
 Unnaturally, as if a living creature?><sup>62</sup> / as one would  
 Nay,<sup>o</sup> lend it rather to thine enemy {But}  
 Who, if he breaks, thou may'st with better<sup>o</sup> face / sterner / rigid  
 Exact<sup>o</sup> the penalty. / Demand

—Shylock            Why look how you storm!<sup>63</sup>  
 I would be friends with you and have your love,<sup>o</sup> / favor / grace  
 Forget the shames that you have stained me with,  
 Supply your present wants, and take no drop<sup>o</sup> {no doit} / no hint  
 Of interest<sup>o</sup> for my monies<sup>64</sup> —and you'll not hear me.<sup>65</sup> {usance} / profit

59. Antonio's likely response, being that he is in need of Shylock's help, might be to pay Shylock the lip-service he desires. But Antonio refuses to acknowledge his mistreatment of Shylock or apologize for it—even though such an apology would better his chances to help Bassanio. Antonio is willing to give up his life for Bassanio but he is not willing to treat Shylock as an equal or approve of any manner of usury or usurer, such is Antonio's unmitigated abhorrence with regards to usurers and their practice.

The scene could be staged such that Bassanio intervenes (for his own benefit, to insure that the loan is not jeopardized) by pulling Antonio aside to try and calm him down.

60. To add fuel to the fire of Antonio's rage—which might be seen as an extension of his opening lines about usury—the following four or six lines could be added here:

<And every usurer as well! They cheat, <sup>o</sup>	/You beguile
And cozen men of their rightful possessions	/ out of their livelihood
Leaving them hapless and in total ruin.	
You call this 'thrift,' though it be none but theft. <sup>o</sup>	/ I say it is thievery
<This baneful <sup>o</sup> practice of usury affronts	/ harmful / sinful / wretched
All that is righteous in the eyes of God.>	

This passage indicates the true grievance Antonio has against Shylock—which involves his ruinous practice of usury, not his Jewishness. Earlier, however, Shylock is quick to implicate Antonio's hatred as being that against Jews (as opposed to a usurers), saying: 'He hates our sacred nation' [1.3.45]. Obviously Shylock is mistaken in this regard. Usury was seen as an 'ungodly' practice which often led to the loss of all one's wealth and property—and that is why the good Antonio was so adamantly set against it. Most usurers were Jews so Antonio's hatred for usurers could easily be misconstrued as a hatred for all Jews. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.127]

61. {As to thy friends, for when did friendship take | A breed for barren metal of his friend?}

**breed:** offspring. Charging interest on a loan (i.e., making money from money, producing 'offspring' from barren metal) was viewed as unnatural (and going against divine law); money, made out of metal, cannot naturally breed and multiply like a living thing. Jews, at the time, could not own property and loaning of money, with interest, was one of the few ways they could earn a profit. Some argue that the charging of a full seven days of interest (per week) went against the laws of the Sabbath since one's money was 'working' and 'creating' on the day when man was commanded to rest.

62. / ... for when did friendship breed | Barren metal (as 'twere a living thing? | Such a perversion goes against nature.)  
 / ... for when did friendship charge | Interest on barren metal (as if it were | The offspring of a living creature?)

63. {Why look you how you storm}

The line, as it appears in Q1, is somewhat awkward, in that it repeats the term *you* twice and contains 6 + 6 iambs (instead of 4 + 6). Both suggest some kind of error in the text or typesetting.

64. {And take no doit | Of usance for my monies} / And take no drop | Of profit for my monies

65. **You'll not hear me:** this could mean: and you will not hear my offer, my proposal (for the loan). More deeply, it could mean: and you will not hear me, you will not accept me as a person, as an equal, as a friend. Antonio never 'sees' or 'hears' Shylock as a person; likewise, when Shylock has power over Antonio, he refuses to hear him: [Ant: I pray thee, hear me speak. Shy: I'll have my bond: I will not hear thee speak. 3.3.11-12]

Antonio will not hear Shylock because he does not believe in the sincerity of his offer; he sees this charm, this pretense of friendship, as a ruse, as the deceit that usurers use to gain the trust of, and then entrap, their victims. Thus, Antonio will have no part of this. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.137]

This is kind I offer. <sup>66</sup>

—Bassanio            This were<sup>o</sup> kindness. <sup>67</sup>                            / is / would be / is

—Shylock

This kindness <sup>68</sup> will I show:

Go with me to a notary, seal me there

Your guarantee, <sup>69</sup> and, in a merry sport, <sup>o</sup> <sup>70</sup>                            / jest / game

If you repay me not on such a day,

In such a place, such sum or sums as are

Expressed<sup>o</sup> in the condition, let the forfeit                            / Set forth

Be designated as an equal pound <sup>71</sup>                            { Be nominated for } / Be thereby namèd for

Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken

From<sup>o</sup> what part of your body pleaseth me. <sup>o</sup> <sup>72</sup> <sup>73</sup>                            { In }    { It pleaseth me }

⟨—Bassanio <sup>74</sup>

This is more beastly than bizarre. Ne'er have

I heard of terms so strange and ill-conceived. ⟩<sup>75</sup>

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66. {This is kind I offer}:

**kind:** a) kindness, benevolence, b) kinship, friendship, c) something natural (as opposed to something 'unnatural'—which is Antonio's objection to charging interest on a loan, which allows barren metal to produce 'offspring' of metal.

What is Shylock offering? "This is *kind* I offer—I am offering to loan you the money on your terms, in kind (likeness) with your sentiments, and to loan you money (as would a friend) without charging interest. I am going to offer you that but you storm and interrupt me and do not even allow me to make such an offer." [See Additional Notes, 1.3.138]

67. / This *is* kindness!

Here Bassanio is confirming that such an offer (as this point—without having yet heard the grotesque terms of the bond) is kind. Bassanio, somewhat hapless, is not aware of the tricks and subterfuge that usurers use to deceive and entrap their victims. Some productions present the care-free Bassanio as a skeptical and have him pose the line as a cynical question or remark.

68. Shylock is here building upon Bassanio's interpretation of the, 'kind,' to mean kindness, even though Shylock may have intended the term to mean, 'kinship.'

69. {seal me there | Your single bond} / Your fullest guarantee

**single bond:** implies a bond that Antonio would singularly guarantee; an unconditional bond.

70. **in a merry sport:** / in light-hearted fun

Shylock presents the terms of the bond as a merry sport, a fun game, as something that should not be taken seriously—even suggesting that a pound of flesh is useless and that he would not take it even if the bond were forfeited. This, again, can be seen as the deception that usurers use to entrap their victims. This is not a game; this is deadly serious.

71. / Be such that I may have an equal pound

72. [See Additional Notes, 1.3.148a]

73. This grotesque term closely follows that found in *Il Perecone: una libra di carne d'addosso di qualunque luogo e' volesse* (a pound of flesh from whatever place you wish).

How does Shylock (or the Jew in *Il Perecone*, or in *The Ballad of Gernutus*) come to nominate this term of a pound of flesh?—'to be cut off and taken from what part of your body pleaseth me'? And how/why does the condition come to change, and come to read, 'nearest his heart'? {Ay, his breast, | So says the bond, doth it not noble judge? | 'Nearest his heart,' those are the very words. [4.1.249-251]} [See Additional Notes, 1.3.148b]

74. There is likely to be some emotional reaction (by Bassanio) to such a grotesque, alien, and bizarre condition—especially one that puts Antonio's life in danger. Hence, to make known this sentiment, two lines have been added.

75. / These terms are beastly and bizarre. What dwells | In a man's heart to contrive<sup>o</sup> such a thing?

/ These terms are bizarre and ludicrous. | Ne'er have I heard a thing so ill-conceived.

—Antonio

I have no doubts;° I'll seal° to such a bond,  
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

{Content in faith} // sign

—Bassanio

You shall° not seal to such a bond for me;  
I'd rather dwell within° my present needs.° 76

/ must

/ suffer in // in mine own neediness

—Antonio

Why, fear not, man, I will not forfeit it.  
Within these two months—that's a month before  
This bond expires—I do expect return°  
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

/ a profit

—Shylock

O father Abram, how these Christians are:

Their own hard dealings teach them to suspect°  
The thoughts of others! [*to Bassanio*] Pray you, tell me this:

/ mistrust > be suspicious of

If he should break his day° 77 what should I gain

/ If he can't pay on time

By the exaction of° the forfeiture?

/ By my demanding of

A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man,  
Has neither worth nor can afford° a profit 78

/ command

As° flesh of mutton, cow, or goat. 79 I say,  
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship: 80

/ Like

If he will take it, so; if not, adieu.

And for this gesture, for this act of kindness,  
I pray you, wrong me not with evil motives. 81

---

76. {I'll rather dwell in my necessity} / I'd rather suffer in my present needs

77. {break his day}: miss his payment when it is due (on such and such a day)

78. {Is not so estimable, profitable neither}

/ Has neither worth nor can it bring a profit / Brings neither value nor the same profit. / Has but no worth; one cannot even sell it.

79. This argument is, of course, specious. Shylock argues that the pound of flesh has no value—so why would he take it? Yet, the value gained by taking of a pound of Antonio's flesh is in killing Antonio. So, Shylock should have rightfully said, 'What would I gain from taking the pound of flesh and killing Antonio?'

80. In all this talk we sense Shylock's deceitfulness and see him using the ploy of a usurer to entrap Antonio; Shylock revealed this intention when he expressed a deep desire to 'catch Antonio upon the hip,' i.e., gain an advantage over him. Hence, we know that Shylock has a hidden agenda—to put Antonio at a disadvantage. So, what is Shylock trying to accomplish by having Antonio sign this bond? There are two possibilities: a) the remote possibility that Antonio would default on the bond and Shylock could exact his forfeiture, i.e., kill Antonio, or b) Shylock had Antonio sign such a bond—with such grotesque and unflattering terms—to debase Antonio and to somehow put Shylock on equal status with Antonio, at least in Shylock's own mind. See Added Scene 2.1a for Shylock's explanation as to why he nominated these terms for his bond. [See footnote for 1.3.148]

81. {And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not}

/ I pray, don't wrong me with an evil motive / Please don't assign to me an evil motive

**for my love:** for this act of kindness

**wrong me not:** / blame me not / don't blame me / > don't attribute or assign to me some wrong

This last part of Shylock's speech (or argument) is one more example of the 'deceptive art' employed by usurers: first he says that a pound of human flesh is worthless, and so he would have no reason to take it; then he contends that he is acting out of love and kindness—and so much so that he does not want his actions to be misinterpreted as harmful—yet the exact opposite is true: the bond of a pound of flesh (which is humiliating) is worth a lot to Shylock, and his real intention is not motivated by love (as contended) but by hatred (as clearly revealed by Shylock earlier in the scene.) [38-49].



*Portia's house in Belmont.*

*A flourish of cornets. Enter the Prince from Morocco (a dark-skinned Moor dressed in white), with three or four followers (of similar complexion) along with Portia, Nerissa, and attendants*

—Morocco

Mislike <sup>o</sup> me not for my complexion; <sup>o 2</sup>	/ Dislike
This darkened raiment <sup>o</sup> of the burnished sun <sup>o</sup>	{ shadowed livery } // bestowed by the sun
Is worn by all who breed <sup>o</sup> so near <sup>o</sup> its fire. <sup>4</sup>	/ who live // beneath
Bring me a man whose skin is light and fair, <sup>5</sup>	
Born <sup>o</sup> from the coldest regions of the north,	
Where the sun's heat <sup>o</sup> can scarce thaw an icicle, <sup>o 7</sup>	/ rays / fire // scarcely thaw the ice
And let us make a cut <sup>o</sup> at love's behest, <sup>8</sup>	/ cut our skin // request
To prove whose blood is reddest—his or mine.	
I tell thee, lady, <sup>o</sup> this aspect <sup>o</sup> of mine	/ I say, dear lady // feature
Has brought much fear to brave and valiant men. <sup>9</sup>	
And by my love, I swear, it too was loved	
By the most-honored <sup>o</sup> virgins of our clime. <sup>o</sup>	{ best-regarded } / most revered // region
I would not change this dark and noble hue	
Except to steal <sup>o</sup> your thoughts, my gentle queen. <sup>12 13</sup>	/ know <sup>14</sup>

1. This short, filler scene helps alternate the action between Venice and Belmont. In the interest of brevity many productions merge elements of this scene with Morocco's next appearance in 2.7.

2. / Do not disfavor me for my complexion

**my complexion:** Morocco is referring to his dark complexion. A light complexion was held (be Europeans) to be fair (beautiful) whereas a dark complexion was considered unattractive (it being the color of the devil). To fit the meter, *complexion* is pronounced with four syllables: comPLEXeeON

4. {To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.} / Which all my kin bred 'neath its rays do wear.

5. / Bring me a fair creature born in the north / Bring me a man with light and frosty skin,

7. {Where Phoebus's fire scarce thaws the icicles}

**Phoebus's fire:** the sun's heat. Phoebus was god of the sun.

8. {And let us make incision for your love}

9. / Has wrought great fear to those who're valiant / Has prompted many men to run in fright.

12. The whole of Morocco's plea, up to this point, is based on his physical appearance; he hopes to persuade Portia to overcome the prejudice and dislike she has of those with a dark complexion.

13. In the next part of this scene Morocco expounds on the virtue of his strength and physical attributes; swearing upon his sword, he tells how he would outstare and outbrave the most daring men, and defy bears and lions. After that he likens himself to Hercules, the strongest man on earth.

In terms of the three suitors, Morocco represents the physical dimension and its superior position (in terms of strength over others). This can be seen as the exterior or outermost attribute of a person; thus, according to his own "outer" disposition, Morocco chooses the gold chest. Arragon represents the mind and its superior position when compared to the physical body. This is still exterior to the true essence or the heart of a man. Accordingly, Aragon chooses the silver casket, which represents the quality of the mind. Bassanio, in this particular scene, represents the heart, the innermost being of a man—which is not swayed by outer show—and, accordingly, he chooses the lead. Bassanio's speech in front of the caskets, however, belies the true sentiment of the heart; his speech is critical, riddled with discordant images, and it makes not one reference to Portia (or her attributes). Morocco is true to himself, and speaks and chooses accordingly; Aragon is true to himself, and speaks and chooses accordingly. With Bassanio, however, there is a mismatch; his speech before the caskets does not match his choice. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.73]

14. **to steal your thoughts:** to gain access to, or win, your thoughts; to 'win your affection.' In other words, Morocco would give up his dark appearance, which is his dearest possession, to win Portia's affection.

—Portia

In terms of choice,<sup>15</sup> I am not solely led  
By that which gratifies<sup>o</sup> a maiden's eye.<sup>16</sup>  
Besides the contest rendered<sup>o</sup> by my father<sup>17</sup>  
Bars me the right<sup>o</sup> of voluntary choosing.<sup>18</sup>  
But if my father had not scanted<sup>o</sup> me,  
And hedged<sup>o</sup> me by his wit<sup>o</sup> to yield<sup>o</sup> myself,<sup>19</sup>  
As wife, to he who chooses<sup>o</sup> the right casket<sup>20</sup>  
Then you great prince, would stand as fair a chance<sup>21</sup>

/ By what is pleasing to  
/ devised / designed  
/ Prevents my right  
/ thwarted / shorted  
/ bound / forced // will /// give  
/ whom so chooses / whom doth choose

---

15. **In terms of choice:** Portia has no choice in the matter. So all of Morocco's pleas to Portia to 'mislike him not' for his dark complexion are irrelevant. Morocco, however, being a man of honor, would find no gratification in winning Portia if she despised the way he looked.

16. {By nice direction of a maiden's eye}

**nice direction:** attraction toward what is pleasing.

17. {Besides, the lott'ry of my destiny} / of my father's will / deems my fate

18. / Prevents me from effecting mine own choice / Prevents me from a voluntary choosing / Denies me from the right of mine own choice

19. **hedged:** hedged me in, restricted me, bound me (by oath)

**his wit:** his wisdom, his ingenuity (by which this lottery was devised)

**to yield myself:** to give myself as wife (in way of marriage)

20. {His wife who wins me by that means I told you} / As wife to he who chooses the right casket / As wife who wins me by the means described

21. {Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair} / Then you, renowned prince, would stand as fair

**then stood as fair:** a) stand as favored, worthy, b) were as appealing, attractive, c) stood as fair a chance

Portia tells Morocco that he stands as fair (a chance) as any suitor she has looked upon (for her affection) so far. Morocco takes this as a complement. What Portia does not tell Morocco is that she has found all the previous suitors to be deplorable—Morocco, looking like a devil to her, stands equal to the German 'sponge,' the French 'no man,' the dreadfully sad Count, the self-promoting Neopolitan, and the ill-suited Englishman. In the instance where *fair* refers to Morocco's equal chances of winning her, she is not saying anything either: she is saying that Morocco has as fair (equal) a chance of winning her (and her affection) as any suitor she has thus far looked upon.

As any comer<sup>o</sup> I have looked on yet<sup>o</sup>  
For my affection.<sup>o</sup>

/ suitor // I've yet looked upon  
/ To win my favor

—Morocco Even for that I thank you.

Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets

To try my fortune. By this scimitar<sup>22</sup>

/ Arab(ian) sword / faithful sword

That slew a Sultan<sup>o</sup> and a Persian Prince,

{Sophy} / Emp'ror / great Shah

That thrice defeated the great Suleiman,<sup>o 21033</sup>

/ the Sultan of Turkey

I would o'er-stare the sternest<sup>o</sup> eyes that look,

/ harshest

Outbrave the boldest heart that e'er did beat,<sup>24</sup>

Pluck<sup>o</sup> the young suckling cubs from the she-bear,

/ Snatch / grab

Yea, mock<sup>o</sup> the lion when it<sup>o</sup> roars for prey,<sup>25</sup>

/ Defy {he}

To win thee, lady. But alas the while,

If Hercules and his servant play dice,<sup>26</sup>

The hand of chance<sup>27</sup> decides the better man<sup>o</sup>

/ determines the victor / winner

Which may grant victory<sup>o</sup> to the weaker hand:

/ fortune / triumph

So is the hero beaten<sup>o</sup> by his page.<sup>28</sup>

{bested}

And so may I, blind fortune<sup>o</sup> leading me,<sup>o 29 30</sup>

/ with mere chance // led forth by blinded luck

Miss that which one of lesser worth<sup>o</sup> attains—<sup>31</sup>

{one unworthier may}

And die with<sup>o</sup> grieving.

/ from

—Portia You must take your chance,

And either not attempt to chose at all

/ vacate all your rights to choose

Or swear before you choose,<sup>o</sup> if you choose wrong,

/ beforehand, that

---

22. scimitar: a curved, single-edged sword. In a possible staging, Morocco could draw and flourish his scimitar (much to the surprise of Portia's attendants). This would make clear the reference his sword (for those who are not familiar with the term *scimitar*).

23. {That won three fields of Sultan Suleiman} / That won three battles against Suleiman.

24. {Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth}

25. / And grab the prey from a hungry lion

26. {If Hercules and Lichas play at dice}

**Lichas:** Hercules's somewhat low-minded servant. Lichas was thrown into the sea by Hercules after he (Lichas) unwittingly brought Hercules a poisoned shirt which killed him (Hercules).

27. / A throw by chance / A random throw / A chanced toss

28. {So is Alicides beaten by his rage}

**Alicides:** Hercules

**rage:** wanton behavior, wild folly, anger. Although Hercules was known to display rage, the notion of him being defeated by his rage—with respect to the chance drawing of the lottery—does not really fit. Pope emends *rage* with *page*, which is similar to the emendation of *rogue* (derived from *roge*.) Both terms apply to a servant of Hercules. Hence, the intended meaning would be that Hercules is beaten by his *page* or his *rogue*—by a far lesser man, both in terms of strength and character—which is possible when the competition is based solely upon a pure chance throw of the dice, rather than skill.

29. Morocco is complaining that the lottery is comparable to a mere chance throwing of the dice and, as such, may go to a lesser man than himself. Morocco is used to proving his worth and power through physical means; this means of winning Portia through the solving of a riddle is alien to outward, physically-oriented Morocco.

30. Possibility to add a clarifying line here: <And not the prowess held by mine own hand >

<And not the skillful means of mine own hand<sup>o</sup> > / endeavors / own effort

31. / And I, now being led by blind fortune, | May miss the prize a lesser man might win.

To ne'er thereafter take a lady's hand<sup>o</sup> 33  
By<sup>o</sup> way of marriage. Therefore, be advised.<sup>o</sup>

/ propose to a lady  
{In} / ponder well / be so warned

—Morocco  
I need not.<sup>o</sup> Come, bring me unto my chance.<sup>o</sup>34

{Nor will not} // the caskets / my choice

—Portia  
First forward to<sup>o</sup> the altar,<sup>o</sup> (there to take  
The solemn oath required.) After dinner<sup>35</sup>  
Your hazard shall be made.

/ go ye to / go unto {temple} / chapel

—Morocco                      Good fortune then,  
To make me<sup>o</sup> blest or curséd'st among men.

/ To be most

*Flourish of cornets. Exeunt*

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33. {Never to speak to lady afterward}

34. / I do accept—now bring me to the caskets / I will accept—bring me unto the caskets

35. / First, make your oath at the chapel. This evening / Make first your solemn vow. Then, after dinner,

ACT Two, Scene One, A

2.1A

*Venice. Enter Shylock and Tubal*

—Tubal

Three thousand ducats to Antonio?

—Shylock

He loathes me, my means, my profits. He spits on my face and calls me a cut-throat, a dog. And why?—because I loan money to those who are in need. Well, now Antonio is the one in need. Let him revile me at the mart. Let him peddle his Christian virtue. How then will I respond? I will say: ‘Antonio, did you not once borrow money from *me*? Did *I* not loan you money, gratis, out of friendship?’ What would he say to that? Would he be smug and indignant? Would he spit on my face? Nay, the moment Antonio seals this bond he will have nothing over me.

—Tubal <sup>1</sup>

And if he forfeits, what then?

—Shylock

Nay, nay, Antonio will not forfeit. There is little chance that Antonio will forfeit. The only thing he will forfeit is his Christian righteousness.

—Tubal

But a pound of flesh? Such a bond is strange and unseemly?

—Shylock

<sup>2</sup> So you ask, ‘why a pound of flesh?’ I say, if nothing more than to humiliate him, to debase him as he has debased me. Let him call me *usurer*; I will call him *harlot*. He has put up his body for money, my money. Now tell me, what could the good Christian say to that?

*Exeunt*

---

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1. This scene serves to explain Shylock’s motivation for securing a bond with Antonio with such grotesque terms; however, it could undermine Shylock’s more sinister hopes—which might be his hope that Antonio forfeits the bond and that Shylock be in a position to take his life. Hence, these two entries could be deleted. If these two entries are deleted it could be that Shylock’s initial motivation was to humiliate Antonio but once his daughter betrayed him, and Antonio could not pay the bond, this motivation shifted to a desire to kill Antonio.

2. A few lines could be added here, however, they come with the risk of weakening things: (I offered friendship—and he refused. I offered to forgive the years of abuse—and he refused. He would not hear me. He’d rather be my enemy, for me to loan him money with terms and penalties. )

Venice. Enter Launcelet Gobbo, the clown, alone. <sup>1</sup>

—Launcelet

Certainly my conscience will not permit me to run from this Jew, my master.<sup>2</sup> The fiend at mine elbow<sup>3</sup> tempts me, saying, ‘Gobbo, Launcelet Gobbo, good Launcelet,’ or ‘good Gobbo,’ or ‘good Launcelet Gobbo’—‘use your legs, take the start,<sup>4</sup> run away.’ My conscience says, ‘No, take heed, honorable<sup>o</sup> Launcelet; take heed honest Gobbo,’—or as aforesaid, ‘honorable Launcelet Gobbo’—‘do not run; scorn running<sup>o</sup> with thy heels.’ Well the most courageous fiend bids me pack<sup>o</sup> my things. ‘Get going!’<sup>5</sup> says the fiend. ‘Away!’ says the fiend. ‘For the sake of heaven,<sup>o</sup>’ says the fiend, ‘rouse up a brave mind<sup>6</sup>—and run.’ Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart,<sup>7</sup> says very wisely to me, ‘My honest friend Launcelet’—being an honest<sup>8</sup> man’s son, or rather, an honest woman’s son—for indeed my father did something lewd, something sticky, he had a kind of taste ⟨for women who would . . .⟩<sup>9</sup>—well, my conscience says, ‘Launcelet, budge not.’ ‘Budge,’ says the fiend. ‘Budge

---

1. Launcelet’s soliloquy, which provides some comic relief, may have more significance than immediately realized. This is the only time a character appears alone on stage (apart from the two exiting lines delivered by Jessica in 2.6.55-6). This is not significant in itself but may echo the larger issue of Shylock’s internal battle with his own conscience (and his own fiend) with respect to his actions against Antonio. Shylock, tries to resolve his inner turmoil by making an oath to God that he will have his bond even though his conscience and Jewish sense of righteousness bids him to do otherwise. Ironically, Shylock makes his oath to God so that he may have the resolve to support the fiend and go against his conscience. Thus, in the end, both Shylock and Launcelet give into their fiendish side.

The moment Launcelet decides to run (and give into the fiend) he collides with his father, which can be seen as his higher sense of conscience. Later in the play Shylock, trying to give into his fiend, collides with Portia’s superior position and is stopped before he can commit his sinful action. [See Additional Notes: 2.2.1]

2. {Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master}

/ will not allow me to run / will serve me | if it allows me | to run / will try to prevent my running

**certainly:** Launcelet opens the scene with the word, *certainly*, which tells us that he is certain about his own uncertainty. Such an ironic certainty is also had by Shylock.

**serve:** a) permit, allow, b) prevent, not permit, not allow, ‘say nothing against’ In the context of the following monologue—where Launcelet’s *conscience* is bidding him to stay while the *fiend at his elbow* is telling him to go—the term *serve* would more likely mean *prevent* than *serve* (or allow). (It could also be a error for *sever*—an odd form meaning *prevent or keep me from*—but this is unlikely). Various explanations have been offered as to what this line might mean, such as: ‘I’m sure I’ll feel guilty if I run from this Jew,’ (Crowther); ‘I can run away from my master the Jew with a clear conscience,’ (Durband); ‘although conscience speaks against it, he will show good reason why he should go,’ (Brown).

3. / by my good side

4. / get them going

5. {Via!} / Get ye gone! / Away! **via:** Italian for ‘away’

6. / let bravery enter your mind

7. **my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart:** an anatomical mix-up, signifying timidity, ‘a clinging, affectionate attitude,’ or perhaps a reference to ‘being all choked up.’

8. **honest:** in the sense of one who is faithful, one who keeps his marriage vows or fidelity.

9. {for indeed my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste—well . . . }

/ did something which smacked of the lewd, something gross / did something smack, something gross, it left a bad taste in the mouth—well . . .

**smack:** pertaining to vice, lecherous, lewd. It also means a) to kiss noisily; b) a flavor or trait

**grow to:** an expression that generally referred to burnt milk which gets stuck to the bottom of a pan or to that which has the taste of burnt milk—and by extension it could mean something that has been ruined and/or which has a bad taste; also something sticky (like milk sticking to the bottom of a pot)—which might carry a lewd reference to semen. The term could be rendered as: *something sticky*; *something gross* (which sounds like grow to); *something that leaves a bad taste*; *unsavory*; *ruined* (as in a dish ruined by burning), etc. Some commentators hold the term to mean, ‘to grow or get larger,’ implicating a male erection but such an interpretation is a bit of a stretch and does not fit in with the rest of the content.

**taste:** a) inclination toward; b) enjoyment, relish in; c) funny smell about him; d) taste for woman

The three references in this line (*smack*, *grow to*, and *taste*) all suggest some kind of lechery and untoward sexual conduct—all of which makes Launcelet the son of a not-quite honest man.

not,' says my conscience. 'Conscience,' I say, 'you counsel well.' 'Fiend,' I say, 'you counsel well.' If I were ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew, my master, who—God forgive me for saying—<sup>10</sup> is a kind of devil. And, if I were to I run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend who, with all due respect,<sup>11</sup> is the devil himself.<sup>12</sup> My conscience is but a kind of hard conscience that offers to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel. O fiend, I will run. My heels are at your commandment—I will run.<sup>14</sup>

*Enter Old Gobbo, gravel-blind, with a basket*<sup>15</sup>

—Old Gobbo

Master young man, you, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's?

—Launcelet [*aside*]

O heavens, this is my true-begotten father<sup>16</sup> who, being more than sand-blind—high-gravel-blind<sup>17</sup>—knows me not. I will try confusing him.<sup>18</sup>

—Old Gobbo

Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's?

—Launcelet

Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but at the next turning after that, turn left. Then!—(pay careful attention)<sup>19</sup>—at the very next turning, don't turn at all but veer off indirectly to the Jew's house.

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10. {God bless the mark}

11. {saving your reverence} / pardon me for saying

12. The line found in the original {Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation; and in my conscience—" is uncertain and was likely inserted into the text as an afterthought (by someone other than the Author). This unlikely addition also weakens (and contradicts) the word play found in the previous line—which states that the Jew is a kind of devil and the fiend is the devil himself. The repetition of the word 'certainly' which begins the soliloquy is also suspect. The term, *incarnation* is a poor pun for *incarnate*. All said, the line is weak and suspect and therefore it has been deleted.

14. **will not permit:** {will serve} / will not allow **honorable:** {honest} **scorn running:** scorn such running **bids me pack:** urges me to pack **for the sake of heavens:** {for the heavens} / for heaven's sake

15. Launcelet's exit could be staged by his running into his gravel-blind father, who is just entering. His being stopped by his father could be seen as a symbolic representation of his conscience (superego) which stops him, despite his 'final' decision to follow the fiend's counsel and run away.

The scene between Launcelet and his father takes up over 75 lines and then involves Bassanio for another 50 lines, for a total of 125 lines [30-161] yet none of this moves the story. Thus, most productions edit down or delete this portion of the scene. For instance, the entire interaction between Launcelet and his father (as well as between Launcelet, his father, and Bassanio) could be cut [30-161] with the scene continuing at line 162, with Bassanio instructing Lorenzo {I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this}. Another way to edit the scene would be to remove Old Gobbo altogether: the scene would include Launcelet's opening monologue [1-30], then have Launcelet exit the stage, running into Bassanio or one of his men (instead of Old Gobbo). With no actual father present, Launcelet (unable to muster his own courage to speak directly to Bassanio) could invoke (and play the part of) an imaginary father to help him; as such, we would see the same kind of split-personality he displayed in the opening of the scene. [For a line by line editing of how such a scene would play out, see Additional Notes 2.2.29]

16. **my true begotten father:** a mix-up for, 'my true begotten son.' Launcelet was begotten by Old Gobbo not the other way around. The phrase is backwards, yet we clearly understand this to mean that Old Gobbo is Launcelet's true father.

17. **sand-blind, high-gravel-blind:** blindness comes in gradations and Launcelet makes up a some new terms: *sand blind* is someone partially blind; *gravel-blind* is someone midway between sand-blind and stone-blind (total blindness), *high-gravel blind* is somewhere between gravel-blind and stone-blind, which means he can barely see at all.

18. {I will try confusions with him.}

**confusions:** Q2 renders this as *conclusions* which means 'experiments'—'I will try experimenting with him (to see how he reacts.)' Launcelet, however, seems more intent on playfully *confusing* his father.

19. **Then!:** {marry}: The term marry has the force of 'verily,' 'indeed' and by extension, 'now listen carefully' or 'pay attention,' etc.

—Old Gobbo

By the saints of God<sup>20</sup> ‘twill be a hard place<sup>o</sup> to hit.<sup>o</sup> Can you tell me whether one Launcelet, who is supposed to live with him, still lives with him or no? <sup>21</sup>

—Launcelet

Talk you of young Master Launcelet? [*aside*] Watch me now—I will raise a few tears!<sup>o</sup> Talk you of young Master Launcelet? / a few tears: {the waters}

—Old Gobbo

No ‘master,’ sir, but a poor man’s son. His father, though I say it, is an honest, exceeding poor man and, God be thanked, in good health.<sup>o</sup> / {well to live}

—Launcelet

Well, let his father be what he will, we talk of young Master Launcelet.

—Old Gobbo

Is he your worship’s friend, my Launcelet, sir? <sup>22</sup>

—Launcelet

But I pray you, *ergo*,<sup>23</sup> old man, *ergo* I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelet?

—Old Gobbo

Of Launcelet, if it<sup>o</sup> please your mastership. {ant} / should it

—Launcelet

*Ergo* Master Launcelet. Talk not of Master Launcelet, old man,<sup>o</sup> for the young gentleman—according to his fate and destiny, and various legends that include the three sisters<sup>25</sup>—⟨who measure out and cut the thread of one’s life⟩<sup>26</sup>—and such branches of learning—is, indeed deceased; or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven. {father}

—Old Gobbo

Mother of God—forbid! The boy was ⟨to be⟩ the staff of my older years, my very prop.

—Launcelet

---

20. {By God’s sounties} / By God’s little saints / Even with God’s favor / Even with God’s help / Even with the blessings of God

**sounties:** a) little saints, b) sanctity, blessedness.

21. {Can you tell me whether one Launcelet that dwells with him dwells with him or not?} / Can you tell me whether one Launcelet, who is supposed to live with him, lives with him or not?

**place:** {way} **hit:** / find

22. {Your worship’s friend and Launcelet, sir.} / My worship, do you know my boy Launcelet, sir?

**your worship:** honorific title for someone of high standing

**your worship’s friend:** this could be interpreted as a polite rejection of the title of ‘master’ (when applied to Launcelet), who is not a master. This resembles the previous line, where Old Gobbo rejects the term ‘master’ when applied to Launcelet [‘No ‘master,’ sir, but a poor man’s son. [47].] Here, again, he makes the same correction so that there is no confusion and to insure that the two parties are referring to the same Launcelet—who is not a master.

23. **ergo:** Latin term which means, ‘therefore,’ herein used by Launcelet to impress his father with his knowledge Latin, and also to mock scholars who were wont to overuse the term.

25. {Sisters Three} The three old women of classical mythology who spin, measure, and cut the thread of a person’s life, thus determining the length of one’s life span.

26. / who measure the length of a man’s life / who determine the length of one’s life

Do I look like a short stick or a post to hold up a sagging hovel? Am I but a staff or a prop?<sup>27</sup>—Do you not know me, father?<sup>28</sup>

—Old Gobbo

Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman. But I pray you, tell me, is my boy—God rest his soul—alive or dead?

—Launcelet

Do you not know me father?

—Old Gobbo

Alack sir, I am all but blind.<sup>o</sup> I know you not. {I am sand-blind}

—Launcelet

Nay, indeed, even if you had your eyes, you might still fail in knowing me. It is a wise father that knows his own child.<sup>29</sup> Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son. [*he kneels*] Give me your blessing. Truth will come to light, just as a crime cannot be hidden for long. A man's son may <also hide> but in the end the truth will come out.<sup>o</sup> / be known

—Old Gobbo

Pray you, sir, stand up. I am sure you are not Launcelet, my boy.

—Launcelet

Pray you, let's have no more fooling about it<sup>30</sup> but give me your blessing: I am Launcelet, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.

—Old Gobbo

I cannot think you are my son.

—Launcelet

I know not what I shall think of that. But I am Launcelet, the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery, your wife, is my mother.

—Old Gobbo

Her name is Margery, indeed. I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelet, thou are mine own flesh and blood.

*Old Gobbo reaches out to feel Launcelet's face  
Launcelet offers the back of his head<sup>31</sup>*

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27. {Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a staff or a prop?}

**cudgel:** short branch, club

28. {Do you know me, father?}

29. Inversion of the proverb: 'It's a wise child who knows his own father.'

30. / stop all the pretending

31. The action parallels of the same trick played on Isaac by Jacob and his mother (a story referenced by Shylock in his first meeting with Antonio). In this story, Jacob substituted himself for Esau (Jacob's older brother) in order to receive his father's blessings. Jacob, who was smooth-skinned, placed lamb wool over his face and hands—to 'feel' hairy like his brother. When his blind father touched his face, he believed that he was touching Esau (not Jacob) and thereupon blessed Jacob and bequeathed to him all his land and possessions.

All praise the Lord,<sup>32</sup> what a beard hast thou got! Thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin, my cart-horse, has on his tail.

—Launcelet

It should seem, then, that Dobbin's tail grows from long to short:° I am sure he had more hair on his tail than I have on my face, when I last saw him. {backwards}

—Old Gobbo

Lord, how art thou changed! How dost thou and thy master get along?° I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now? {agree}

—Launcelet

Well, well, but for mine own part, I have decided to risk it all<sup>33</sup> and run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground.<sup>34</sup> My master's a very° Jew. Give him a present?—rather give him a noose!<sup>35</sup> I am famished in his service;<sup>36</sup> you may count° every rib I have with your fingers.<sup>37 38</sup>

*⟨Launcelet guides Old Gobbo's fingers to the side of his chest.<sup>39</sup> Old Gobbo's fingers fall down to Launcelet's pot belly; Launcelet again guides Old Gobbo's fingers to his ribs, and they again fall to his belly. Launcelet retreats.⟩*

Father, I am glad you are come. Give your present, for me,<sup>40</sup> to one Master Bassanio, who indeed fashions his servants with fine new uniforms.<sup>41</sup> If I serve not him, I will run as far as God has made ground.<sup>42</sup>

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32. {Lord worshiped might he be} / What blessings the Lord has granted!

33. {set up my rest} / go for broke / risk everything / 'go all in'

*Set up my rest* is a phrase used in the card game, *primero*, where a final wager is made and one bets (risks) all he has. In the modern poker-style game of *Texas Hold-em*, this would be akin to *going all in*. Launcelet, speaking in modern jargon might have said: 'I decided to go all in and run away.'

34. In Q1 the word play is on the two meanings of *rest*: 'I have set up my *rest* (i.e., risk it all), in deciding to run away, and I will not *rest* till I have run some ground.' Alternatively, a play could be made on the word *made* (or *taken*): 'I've made (taken) my final stance, which is to run away, so I will not rest till I have made (taken) some ground.'

35. Add: ⟨I provide him with comsummed° service and for this get but the lowest wages.⟩ *Consummed*, a slip for *consummate*, but also with the implication that Launcelet eats a lot.

36. Add: ⟨as he allows me no more than three meals a day.⟩

37. {You may tell every finger I have with my ribs}

The line is backwards, and should read: 'You may tell every rib I have with your fingers.' A more literal rendering might be: 'You may count every rib as if it were a finger.'

38. **very**: true \ veritable **count**: {tell} / recognize

39. A common staging is one where Launcelet spreads out his fingers on his own rib cage and then guides his father's hand to feels his fingers as if they were his exposed ribs.

40. {Give me your present } / Give your present on my behalf

41. {gives rare new liveries} / gives rare new outfits (to his servants) / gives embroidered costumes (to his workers) / suits his workers with fine new costumes

42. Launcelet seems to be making some heroic claim of 'making ground, or running to the far ends of the earth' yet in Venice, which is a series of island, his 'end' would come after a few hundred yards.

*Enter Bassanio, with Leonardo and other followers*

O rare fortune!<sup>43</sup> Here comes the man—to him, father, (give him your gift.)<sup>44</sup>

—Bassanio [*to one of his men*]

You may do so, but let it be done quickly that supper be ready at the latest by<sup>o</sup> five o'clock. See these letters delivered, put the new uniforms to making, and direct<sup>o</sup> Gratziano to come anon to my lodging.  
45 46

*Exit Servant*

—Launcelet [*pushing his father*]

To him, father.

—Old Gobbo [*bowing*]

God bless your worship.

—Bassanio

Many thanks.<sup>47</sup> Would'st thou want<sup>o</sup> with me? { aught }

—Old Gobbo

Here's my son, sir, a poor boy—

—Launcelet [*steps forward*]

Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man that would, sir, as my father shall specify—  
[*pulls his father in front*]

—Old Gobbo

He hath a great infection,<sup>o</sup> sir, as one would say, to serve— > *affection* / desire

—Launcelet [*pulls his father away*]

Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have the desire, as my father shall specify—  
[*pulls his father in front*]

---

43. / What a stroke of luck!

44. In Q1, the line reads: {To him father, for I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer.}

**for I am a Jew:** for I am a villain

This appears as another *ex post facto* line added to the text—which is also evidenced in 24-25 and 160. As expected, most of these corrupted (and Jew-disparaging) lines, are added toward the end of a passage, where they can most easily be 'slipped into' the text (without much disruption). However, in virtually all cases, these 'corrupted emendations' appear misplaced, gratuitous, and orphaned from the rest of the passage—both in terms of style and content.

45. Bassanio is busy preparing for his departure to Belmont, which is to take place later that night.

**put the new uniforms to making:** {put the liveries to making} refers to the uniforms (not yet made) which are needed for the servants who will be attending Bassanio on his trip to Belmont.

**and direct Gratziano:** this also refers to Bassanio's trip—Bassanio seeks to take Gratziano with him to Belmont, even before Gratziano makes his request to go [2.2.170] [See Additional Notes, 2.2.113]

46. **done quickly:** {so hasted} **at the lasted by:** {at the farthest by} no later than **direct:** {desire} / please have

47. {Gramercy}: lit.: 'grant mercy'; [God] grant [you] mercy

—Old Gobbo

His master and he—saving your worship's reverence—are scarce on good terms<sup>48</sup>—

—Launcelet [*pulls his father away*]

To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father—being, I hope, a respected<sup>o</sup> man—shall frutify<sup>49</sup> unto you—[*pulls his father in front*]

**respected:** {old} / a man wise with wisdom

—Old Gobbo

I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow<sup>o</sup> upon your worship, and my suit<sup>o</sup> is—

**bestow:** / offer / present    **suit:** / request

—Launcelet [*pulls his father away*]

In very brief, the suit is impertinent<sup>50</sup> to myself, as your worship shall know by this honest old man; and though I say it, it is though this old man, this poor man,<sup>51</sup> my father—

—Bassanio

Let one but speak for both. [*to Launcelet*] What do you seek?<sup>o</sup> <sup>52</sup> {What would you}

—Launcelet

To serve you, sir.

—Old Gobbo

That is the very defect<sup>53</sup> of the matter, sir.

—Bassanio [*to Launcelet*]

I know thee well. Thou hast obtained thy suit.<sup>o</sup>

/ I shall grant thy request

Shylock, thy master, spoke with me this day

And recommended thee.<sup>54</sup> But why prefer<sup>55</sup>

{And has preferred thee, if it be preferment}

To leave a rich Jew's service to become

The follower of so poor a gentleman?

/ The lowly servant of a poor gentleman

---

48. {are scarce cater-cousins}

**scarce:** (a) scarcely, hardly

**cater-cousins:** close friends, those who give (or cater) to each other like cousins

49. Error for *fructify* or *certify*.

50. Error for *pertinent*. *Impertinent* seems to be a blend between *important* and *pertinent*

51. {though I say it, though old man,<sup>o</sup> yet poor man, my father} / it is though said by this old man

52. / What would you want of me?

53. Mistake for *effect*, purpose, or purport

54. Bassanio is referring to a conversation had between himself and Shylock. This tells us, moreover, that Shylock and Bassanio are on speaking, and somewhat friendly, terms. We do not know what Shylock could have said about Launcelet to prompt Bassanio to so readily accept him—unless it was that Shylock, wanting to get rid of gormandizing Launcelet, highly recommended his wasteful servant to Bassanio.

55. This one line could be replaced with three lines—lines that express Shylock wanting so much to get rid of Launcelet that we would be willing to pay Bassanio to take the fool.

And recommended you (and was so kind

To offer me some gold if I would take you.)

Tell me, is this a change that you prefer

—Launcelet

As the old proverb says, ‘The grace of God provides enough.’<sup>57</sup> This very well divides my master Shylock from you, sir: you have the ‘grace of God,’ sir, and he hath ‘enough.’<sup>58</sup>

—Bassanio

Thou speakst it well—[*to Old Gobbo*] Go, father, with thy son.

[*to Launcelet*] Take leave of thy old master; then make way

Unto my house. [*To one of his men*] Give him a uniform<sup>o</sup>

{livery}

More fancy<sup>o</sup> than his fellows.<sup>o</sup> See it done.<sup>59</sup>

/ braided / trimmed // the others

---

57. The old proverb is: ‘The grace of God is gear enough,’ which comes from the biblical passage: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’ [2 Cor. 12:9]

/ The grace of God is well enough / The grace of God provides enough

58. {The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough.}

59. {Give him a livery | More guarded than his fellows.}

**guarded:** ornamented with braid or trim; fancy, trimmed, ornamental. Why Launcelet gets a uniform ‘more guarded than his fellows’ is not clear. Launcelet’s fancy uniform finds likeness to the gold casket which is the most ornamental in show yet which contains the least inside. The ornamental garment also brings to mind the image of a ‘yellow-guarded coat’ which might be worn by a fool or a jester. We must, however, assume Bassanio’s motives are generous, and welcoming, and have nothing to do with accentuating Lancelot’s fool-heartedness.

—Launcelet

Father, let's go.<sup>60</sup> I cannot get a service job (on my own)?—I have ne'er a tongue in my head!<sup>60</sup> [*Looking at his palm*] Well, if any man in Italy has a fairer palm, which he may<sup>o</sup> offer to swear upon the Book, I shall have good fortune. [*Looking more closely at the lines*] What<sup>61</sup>—here's a simple line of life and it tells of<sup>o</sup> a small trifle of wives, alas, fifteen in the least.<sup>o62</sup> A dozen<sup>63</sup> widows and nine maids is a simple income—or coming-in—for one man.<sup>64</sup> And here it says I will 'scape from drowning thrice and elude the peril of a sword—belonging to a man who catches me on the edge of a featherbed with his wife.<sup>65</sup> Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this task. Father, come, I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye.<sup>66 67</sup>

*Exeunt Launcelet and Old Gobbo*

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60. / I cannot speak for myself?

This line is delivered with sarcasm. Launcelet is realizing (in a moment of clarity) that he is a fool and cannot even get a service job for himself (without the help of his father). This is soon remedied when Launcelet takes to reading his own palm and 'discovers' that rather than having a simple life (as expected) he is going to be a grand personage, with 15 wives!

61. {Go to}: a) a slight expression of disbelief and surprise: come on, what's this (unexpected thing I see); b) a slight curse, such as: damn, to hell, go to hell. Launcelet, looking at his palm, could a) be pleasantly surprised about his good fortune and all the wives and adventure he is going to have, or b) be taken aback and cursing his discovery of a simple lifeline—which he then refutes. [See Additional Notes, 2.2.153]

Shylock uses the same phrase, in 1.3.112 [Well, now it appears you need my help— | Go to, then].

62. / And in regards to that small matter of wives, [*looking down again*—alas, here it says fifteen wives in the very least.

63. {a leven}: The two-word term suggests the analogy of 'a dozen' (or 'an even dozen') though most editions supplant the term with 'eleven.' Some editions retain the spelling 'aleven' which seems to imply 'eleven.'

64. {is a simple coming-in}: implies income, perhaps from dowries, but also has the sexual innuendo of entering into (coming-in) a woman.

65. {and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed—here are simple scapes}

**the edge of a feather-bed:** this implies that he is coming out of a soft-bed with another man's wife (which puts his life in peril). This is humorous mix-up of the phrase, 'the edge of a sword' becomes 'edge of a feather-bed.'

66. {I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling.}

**in the twinkling:** immediately, without delay, in the blink of an eye, in 'the twinkling of an eye.' This line, along with a few others in the scene [including 24-5, and 108] are "off" in terms of content and tonality. This line could be left as is (in its incomplete form), emended ('in the twinkling of an eye'), or rectified—preserving the intent of the line, which is that Launcelet intends to take leave of the Jew without delay. A comical emendation would be to use the term *tinkle* in place of *twinkle*. [I'll take my leave of the Jew before I tinkle.] This absurd image would be used to mock the hero's cry, who, having an urgent task to perform, tells his lady that he will not sleep until the task is accomplished. This is the pledge Bassanio makes to Portia right before he takes his leave from Belmont [3.2.321-24]. Here Launcelet would make the heroic claim that he will not urinate until his task is accomplished. As part of a comic staging, Launcelet could look very restless, needing to go real bad, and hence be in a great hurry to take leave of the Jew and thus relieve himself.

67. **let's go:** {in} **he may:** {doth} **palm:** {table} **and it tells of:** {here's} **in the least:** {is nothing}

**task:** {gear} / work / stuff / business / matter

—Bassanio [*continuing his instructions*]  
 I pray, Leonardo, attend thee to this:<sup>68</sup>  
 When everything is bought and stowed on board<sup>69</sup> {orderly bestowed}  
 Return in haste, for I do feast tonight<sup>70</sup> / entertain  
 With all my dearest friends.<sup>71</sup> Now hurry, go. / My best-esteemed companions

— Leonardo  
 My best endeavors shall be done herein.<sup>o</sup> / I'll do my utmost to complete the task

*Leonardo moves to exit. Enter Gratziano.*

—Gratziano  
 Where's your master?

—Leonardo           Yonder, sir, he walks.

*Exit Leonardo*

—Gratziano  
 Signior Bassanio!

—Bassanio  
                           Signior Gratziano!<sup>72</sup>

—Gratziano  
 I have a suit for you.<sup>o</sup> / I have but one request

—Bassanio            You have obtained it.<sup>o</sup> / And I will grant it

—Gratziano  
 Very well: I must go with you to Belmont.<sup>73 74</sup>

68. {I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this} / I pray thee Leonard, attend to this

**think on this:** a) attend to these matters, b) think carefully about what I am saying

69. Bassanio is preparing to leave for Belmont and is having his provisions stowed on board his ship.

70. {for I do feast tonight}

**feast:** a) entertain, throw a feast for (my best-esteemed acquaintance); b) eat, party, enjoy myself at a feast (with my best-esteemed acquaintance)

71. {. . . for I do feast tonight | My best-esteemed acquaintance. Hie thee, go.}

The reference here is singular; Bassanio refers to his *best-esteemed acquaintance*. This might be interpreted as a reference to Antonio yet Antonio is his dearest friend not his best-esteemed *acquaintance*. Odd as it may seem, this is most likely a reference to Shylock, who is an *acquaintance* (not a friend) and who is *best-esteemed* in that he loaned Bassanio the money that enabled him to make his journey. Thus, Shylock as the *best-esteemed acquaintance* will be the honored guest at Bassanio's celebration. Obviously Shylock does not view Shylock and his usury with the same vitriol as does Antonio.

72. Q1 has: 'Gratiano.' *Signior* has been added to complete the meter, and to echo Gratziano's words.

73. {You must not deny me. I must go with you to Belmont.}

This line is likely corrupt for the following reasons: a) the iambs are misplaced (with no emphasis on the fourth syllable) and b) the line contains seven iambs (instead of five). In addition, Gratziano is amiss in making a demand [*you must not deny me*] after his request has already been granted. More likely, Gratziano would be confirming what Bassanio had just granted, with a line such as: 'Very well then—I'll go with you to Belmont.' To bring this line into the regular iambic meter, some editions add 'Nay,' to the beginning: 'Nay, you must not deny me. I must go | With you to Belmont.' Another way to rectify the line (in terms of meter and content) would be to have Bassanio grant Gratziano's request once,

---

not twice:

*Grat:* I have a suit—and you must not say ‘no’— / deny me  
Signior, I must go with you to Belmont.

*Bass:* Why then you must. But hear thee Gratziano,

74. Bassanio may have known of Gratziano’s request before he even asked it—and that is why he granted Gratziano’s suit without even hearing it. This is in accord with the following suppositions: a) Before the action of the play begins, Nerissa may have had a chance meeting with Gratziano, where they took a liking to each other and where Nerissa heard about Bassanio, and where she recalled that Bassanio had already been to Belmont and caught Portia’s eye; b) Nerissa arranged to have a secret meeting with Bassanio (which Bassanio told Antonio about in opening act of the play), where Nerissa told him about the lottery devised by Portia’s father and gave him the assurance that if he could win Portia’s love then she (Nerissa) would give him a hint by which he could win the lottery, and c) as part of this plan—and likely for her own romantic interests—she asked that Bassanio bring Gratziano with him to Belmont. [See Additional Note, 2.2.171]

—Bassanio

Why then you must, but hear thee Gratziano:

Thou art too wild, too rude and bold of voice—

Parts that become<sup>o</sup> thee happily<sup>o</sup> enough<sup>75</sup> / Aspects that suit / fittingly

And, to our eyes, do not appear as faults—<sup>76</sup>

But where thou art not known<sup>77</sup> these may appear

Something<sup>o</sup> too overbearing. Thus, take pains<sup>78</sup> / A tad / A bit

To allay with some drops of self-control<sup>o</sup><sup>79</sup> {modesty}

Thy bounding<sup>o</sup> spirit lest through thy wild behavior<sup>80</sup> {skipping} / leaping

I be disfavored<sup>o</sup><sup>81</sup> in the place I go<sup>o</sup> {I be misconstered} // in the eyes of others

And lose<sup>o</sup> my hopes ⟨of success⟩.<sup>82</sup> / ruin / dash

—Gratziano

Now<sup>o</sup> hear me:

{Signor Bassanio}

If I do not display a staid demeanor,<sup>o</sup><sup>83</sup>

/ sober manner

Talk with respect, and swear but now and then,

Hold a prayer-book in my hand,<sup>84</sup> look demurely,

Nay, more, while saying grace,<sup>o</sup> cover mine eyes<sup>85</sup> {while grace is saying}

Thus, with my hat, and sigh, and say, ‘Amen,’

And follow every count of good behavior—<sup>o</sup><sup>86</sup> / manner of politeness

Like one well-studied<sup>o</sup> in a sad expression<sup>o</sup> / well-versed {sad ostent}

To please his grandma—never trust me more.<sup>o</sup><sup>87</sup> / ne'er trust me again

---

75. / Aspects that fit thy manner well enough / Traits that are fitting to thee well enough / Qualities that become you well enough

76. {And in such eyes as ours appear not faults} / And traits that we do not decry as faults

77. {But where thou art not known} / But where they know you not

78. {Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain}

**Something too liberal:** / somewhat too boisterous, ‘in-your-face,’ etc.

79. {To allay with some cold drops of modesty}

80. One could expand the previous two line into three lines:

/ To much allay thy exuberant spirit

With a few drops of cooling modesty,

Lest through your wild and raucous behavior

81. {I be misconstered}: / I be misconstrued / I find disfavor

82. **And lose my hopes:** Perhaps Gratziano’s rude and boisterous behavior might cause Portia to look less favorable upon Bassanio. If Bassanio intended to win the lottery, and Portia, by his own wits then Gratziano’s actions would have no effect on the outcome of the lottery nor cause Bassanio to ‘lose his hopes.’ Thus it appears that Bassanio is pinning his hopes of success on something other than his ability to solve the riddle and chose the right casket. If, however, Bassanio was assured that he would get some help with the lottery (from Nerissa) if he is able to win Portia’s heart, then Gratziano’s rudeness might put off Portia and, thus, Bassanio would lose his hopes of Portia falling in love with him.

[See Additional Notes, 2.2.181]

83. {If I do not put on a sober habit}

**sober habit:** a) solemn, serious, funeral-like behavior, b) sober clothing, a sober garb—referring to a sober look.

84. {Wear prayer-books in my pocket}

85. / Nay, more, while grace is being said, look down

86. {Use all observance of civility} / Observe all manner of good behavior / And use all manner of civility // And employ every manner of politeness

87. / So as to please his grandma—trust me never.

—Bassanio  
Well, we shall see the way you hold yourself.

—Gratziano  
Nay, but I drink<sup>o</sup> tonight.<sup>88</sup> You shall not judge<sup>o</sup> me {bar} {gauge}  
By what we do tonight.

—Bassanio                   No, t'were a pity.<sup>89</sup>                   /'Twould be a pity  
I would entreat you rather to put on  
Your boldest suit of mirth; for we have friends  
That want some merriment.<sup>o</sup> But fare you well,<sup>90</sup>                   / a good party  
I have some business.

—Gratziano  
And I must meet<sup>o</sup> Lorenzo and the rest.                   {to}  
But we will visit you at suppertime.

*Exeunt*

---

---

88. **but I bar tonight:** I go to the bars tonight; I party tonight; I am exempt from any such restrictions tonight

89. {No, that were a pity}

90. {That purpose merriment. But fare you well} / Who're set on merriment

*Shylock's house. Enter Jessica and Launcelet.*

—Jessica

I'm sorry thou wilt leave my father so.

Our house is hell;<sup>o</sup> and thou, a merry devil,  
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.<sup>2</sup>

> hellishly dull

But fare thee well. There is a ducat for thee.

And Launcelet, soon at supper shalt thou see

Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest.

Give him this letter; do it secretly.

And so farewell. I would not have my father

See me in talk with thee.

—Launcelet

Adieu. Tears exhibit<sup>3</sup> my tongue. Most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew. If a Christian did not fool  
'round with your mother and get thee<sup>4</sup> I am much deceived. But adieu. These foolish drops<sup>o</sup> do  
sometimes drown my manly spirit. Adieu.

**drops:** / tears

*Exit Launcelet*

—Jessica

Farewell, good Launcelet.

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me,

To shun my father and betray his trust.<sup>o</sup><sup>5</sup>

/ bring him dishonor

But though I am a daughter to his blood,

I am not to his manners.<sup>o</sup><sup>6</sup> O Lorenzo,

/ I am not kin to his ways

If thou keep promise I shall end this strife,

/ O my Lorenzo, soon I'll end this strife

Become a Christian and thy loving wife.<sup>7</sup>

*Exit*

1. Rowe did not divide 2.2 - 2.6 into separate scenes but played them all as one continuous action.

2. / When things got hellishly drab around here, | You, like a merry devil, came to rob | The taste of tediousness with your laughter.

3. Slip for *inhibit*, but this term might also apply in the sense that he is talking with his tears and that his tears are telling what his tongue is unable to tell.

4. {If a Christian do not play the knave and get thee} / If a Christian did not fool behind you your father's back and beget thee

5. {To be ashamed to be my father's child}

It is not clear as to why being 'ashamed to be her father's child' is a 'heinous sin.' The sin relates to Jessica's upcoming actions, whereby she betrays her father. Thus, the line has been changed to reflect this view.

6. {I am not to his manners}

*Manners* most likely refers to Shylock's somber and thrifty (or hardened) ways but it could also refer to his adherence to Jewish tradition. [See Additional Notes, 2.3.19]

7. / If as you promise, if your word be true, | I'll soon be Christian, and e'er with you.

*Venice. Enter Gratziano, Lorenzo, Salarino, and Salanio*<sup>1</sup>

—Lorenzo

Nay, we will slip<sup>o</sup> away at supper-time,<sup>o</sup> {slink} / steal // during the feast  
 Go to my lodging, put on our disguise,  
 And then return here all within the hour.<sup>3</sup> / And return here within an hour's time

—Gratziano

We have not made good preparation.<sup>4</sup>

—Salarino

We have not spoke us<sup>o</sup> yet of torchbearers. / spoke as yet / spoken yet

—Salanio

This plan will go afoul if not well-made;<sup>5</sup>  
 And best, I think,<sup>o</sup> abandoned altogether.<sup>6</sup> / methinks // And better yet

—Lorenzo

'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours  
 To get things ready.<sup>o</sup> {To furnish us} / to run the plan / to finish up

*Enter Launcelet with a letter*

Launcelet, what's the news?<sup>7</sup>

1. Like many other scenes, this scene also opens *in media res*, in the middle of an ongoing conversation. Here Lorenzo is discussing the preparation of a plan, which is surely the plan to steal away Jessica later that night.

3. This is a poorly conceived plan as Gratziano notes in the following line. They do not yet know if Shylock is going to be at the dinner (which they happen to find out from Launcelet later in the scene [16]). The plan might be to slink away during dinner and then return within an hour to the masque (which would follow dinner). Again, why they plan to go the dinner in the first place, and why they should return in a disguise, is not known. Perhaps the plan is tentative and changes with the arrival of Jessica's letter, which notes that Shylock will be out for the evening.

4. **preparation:** securing everything needed to steal away Jessica. As part of this preparation they must also prepare their costumes.

5. {'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly ordered} / 'Tis bound to fail unless it be well-planned

**vile:** foul, likely to go wrong

**quaintly:** noticeably; well-, carefully, with consideration

**ordered:** a) planned, b) carried out

6. {And better in my mind not undertook} / And better yet, the plan should be abandoned.

This refers to the ill-conceived plan to steal away Jessica. Salanio, it seems, is more level-headed than both Lorenzo (who is foolishly acting out of love) and Gratziano, who is, well, Gratziano.

7. {Friend Launcelet, what's the news?} It is not clear how Lorenzo would know Launcelet, or come to call him 'friend,' but we can suspect that his interest in Jessica—and the common method of using servants to deliver messages back and forth—would make Launcelet his 'friend.' Where Lorenzo and the others are meeting and how Launcelet comes upon them is unclear. Jessica instructed Launcelet to deliver the message to Lorenzo at dinner: *soon at supper shalt thou see* | *Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest.* | *Give him this letter; do it secretly.* [2.3.5-7]. Here it is four o'clock, not six o'clock. [See Additional Notes, 2.4.9]

—Launcelet [*handing him the letter*]  
And shall it please you to break the seal it shall tell you.<sup>8</sup>

—Lorenzo  
I know the handwriting<sup>o</sup> ‘tis a fair hand, {I know the hand, in faith}<sup>9</sup>  
And whiter than the paper ‘tis writ on  
Is the fair hand that writ

—Gratziano Love-news, I think.<sup>o</sup> {in faith}

—Launcelet  
By your leave, sir.<sup>10</sup>

—Lorenzo  
Where<sup>o</sup> goest thou? {Whither}

—Launcelet  
Well sir, to bid my old master the Jew to sup tonight with my new master the Christian.<sup>11</sup>

—Lorenzo  
Hold here, take this [*gives him a coin*]. Tell gentle Jessica,  
I will not fail her.<sup>12 13</sup> Speak it<sup>o</sup> privately. / Tell her

*Exit Launcelet*

---

8. {And it shall please you to break up this, shall it seem to signify}

9. **I know the hand:** refers to Jessica’s handwriting.

10. / With your permission, sir, I now will leave

11. Jessica’s letter outlines her plan with a ‘go ahead’ for tonight. This confirmation, we must assume, is based upon Jessica’s belief that her father will accept Bassanio’s invitation for dinner and be away that evening.

12. {Tell gentle Jessica | I will not fail her}

All Launcelet knows is that Lorenzo will not fail Jessica—he knows nothing about what Lorenzo is referring to nor anything about Lorenzo ‘coming by’ to Jessica’s house later that evening. However, in the next scene, when Launcelet is bidding farewell to Shylock, his final words to Jessica are: *Mistress, look out at window for all this: / There will come a Christian by / Will be worth a Jew’s eye.* [2.5.39-42] As stated, he had no way of knowing this.

One way to rectify this discrepancy would be to add a line whereby Lorenzo tells Launcelet something of the plan:

Hold here, take this [*gives him a coin*]. Tell gentle Jessica,

⟨We’ll meet as planned, beneath her balcony—⟩

I will not fail her.

The discrepancy is slight and need not be rectified since Lorenzo telling the loose-lipped Launcelot of his plan could be more problematic.

13. What we find is that Lorenzo *does* fail her, that he comes an hour late [2.6.2]—a delay which, in all likelihood, would have blown the whole plan. This delay (which he attributes to having had to finish up some business) would have given Shylock ample time to return from dinner—unless the ‘business’ which caused his delay was to wait at Bassanio’s until he was sure that Shylock arrived (which meant that the coast was clear).

[to Salarino and Salanio]

Will you be ready for the masque tonight?<sup>o</sup> 14 15  
I've got myself a golden torchbearer.<sup>16</sup>

/ the masquerade?  
/ I am provided with

—Salarino

By Mary, I'll get to it straight away.<sup>17</sup>

{Ay marry} / With tending / God willing

—Salanio

And so will I.

—Lorenzo Meet me and Gratziano

At Gratziano's lodging in an hour.<sup>o</sup>

{some hour hence} / one hour hence

—Salarino

'Tis good we do so.<sup>o</sup>

/ We'll surely do so

*Exit Salarino and Salanio*

—Gratziano

Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

—Lorenzo

I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed  
How I shall take her from her father's house,  
What gold and jewels she is furnished with,<sup>o</sup>  
What page's suit she'll wear for her disguise.<sup>o</sup> 18  
If e'er the Jew, her father, comes to heaven  
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake;<sup>19</sup>

/ she will bring with her  
{she hath in readiness}

14. / Go gentlemen—prepare you for the masque

15. The Q1 text reads:

I will not fail her, speak it privately

Go Gentlemen, will you prepare you for this mask tonight,

I am provided of a Torch-bearer.

*Exit Clowne.*

[See Additional Notes, 2.4.21]

16. {I am provided of a torchbearer}

Masquerade parties were elaborate affairs and sometimes the guests, dressed as dignitaries, would be accompanied by a torchbearer to announce their entry. Lorenzo's reference to Jessica as his torchbearer does not indicate that she will mark his entrance at the masque but that she will illumine his life with love and beauty.

17. {Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight}

**marry:** An exclamation evoking the name of Mary, Jesus's mother. It is similar to 'by Mary,' or 'by the mother of God' and would, by extension, mean: 'in truth, indeed, surely,' etc.

18. This plan is contingent upon Shylock being out of the house, which is something they are not yet sure of since the invitation to dine with Bassanio has not yet been accepted. It seems that Jessica is sure that Shylock will accept the offer (even though he is hesitant).

19. The next three lines are odd and out of place and have no reason to come out of Lorenzo's mouth—and these harsh lines divert and interfere with Lorenzo's loving reverie concerning Jessica. These appear like anti-Semitic emendations—emendations, like several other in the play, that make a rude entrance at the end of several scenes or as part of a character's exiting lines. Not only are these lines suspect (in this content) they break up the flow of the passage and force their way in as an inopportune afterthought. Hence, these words do nothing more than drag the dialogue and harm Lorenzo's character. As these lines are misplaced—and were likely added by someone other than the author—they have been deleted. The lines, as found in Q1, read as follows:

{And never dare misfortune cross her foot}<sup>o</sup>

/ And may misfortune never cross her path,

{Unless she do it under this excuse:}<sup>o</sup>

/ Else it befalls her under this excuse:

{That she is issue<sup>o</sup> to a faithless Jew}

/ daughter

Come, go with me; [*gives Gratziano the letter*] peruse this as thou goest.  
Fair Jessica shall be my torchbearer.<sup>20</sup>

*Exeunt*

---

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**cross her foot:** obstruct her path. This refers to the inauspicious omen of tripping over something when on a journey. Here it could be applied to her 'journey of life,' the journey she is about to take as wife of Lorenzo.

**Unless she:** unless it, unless misfortune. Fate, destiny, and fortune—and in this case 'misfortune'—were attributed to a goddess and female in gender. Thus *she* refers to the goddess of misfortune and not Jessica.

**faithless:** a) lacking faith in Christ, b) lacking truth, untrustworthy

[See Additional Notes, 2.4.37]

20. As stated in a previous note, this reference to a torchbearer does not mean that Jessica is going to be Lorenzo's torchbearer at the masque but, symbolically, that she is going to light his way. We might also assume, by way of analogy, that part of the light that Jessica will provide is the light (or brightness) of the gold she is going to gild herself with. Compare this light-giving aspect of Jessica with Portia's light-giving in 5.1.129.

ACT TWO – Scene Five 2.5.0

Venice. Enter Shylock and Launcelet

—Shylock

Well, thou shalt° see, thy eyes shall be thy judge, / shall / will  
The difference ‘tween° old Shylock and Bassanio. {of}  
[calling] Hey° Jessica! Thou shalt not stuff thyself <sup>1</sup> {What}  
As thou hast done with me. [calling] Hey° Jessica! {What}  
Nor sleep, and snore, and wear out all your pants  
From sitting round all day. <sup>2</sup> [calling louder] Hey° Jessica! {Why}

—Launcelet

Hey° Jessica! {Why}

—Shylock

I do not bid thee call. / Who bids thee call? Not I.

—Launcelet

Your worship always  
Told me I could do nothing without bidding. <sup>3</sup>

Enter Jessica

—Jessica

Have you been calling me? What is your will?

—Shylock

I am bid forth to supper, Jessica:  
Here are my keys. But why then° should I go? {wherefore}

---

1. {Thou shalt not gormandize} / Thou shalt not gluttonize.

A curious combination of a Jewish type commandment, ‘thou shalt not’ and a Christian admonition against gluttony.

2. {And sleep, and snore, and rend apparel out}

/ And sleep and snore, and wear out all your clothes / And wear out clothes from sitting ‘round all day.

/ And sleep and snore and wear out the bottom | Of pants from sitting on them all day long.

/ And sleep, and wear out the seat of your pants | From all your sitting on them all the day.

**rend:** this terms usually implies *tearing*. In this context—where Launcelet sleeps and snores on the job—*rend* would imply the wearing out of clothes through sitting on them all day, thinning the fabric—especially at the seat of one’s pants—making them more prone to tears and rips.

3. { Shy: And sleep and snore and rend apparel out

Why Jessica, I say!

Launce: Why Jessica!

Shy: Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

Launce: Your worship was wont to tell me I could do nothing without bidding. }

I am not bid for love. They flatter me.<sup>4 5</sup>  
 But yet I'll go in spite,<sup>o</sup> to feed upon {hate}  
 The wasteful<sup>o</sup> Christian. Jessica, my girl, {prodigal}  
 Care for<sup>o</sup> my house. I am right loathe to go; {Look to} / Attend / Maintain  
 There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest<sup>o</sup> 6 / in my mind  
 For I did dream of money-bags last night<sup>o</sup>— 7 {tonight}  
 <A sign that augurs some upcoming loss.<sup>o</sup>><sup>8</sup> / some loss in the future

—Launcelet  
 I beseech you, sir, go. My young master  
 Doth expect your *reproach*.<sup>9</sup>

—Shylock As I expect his.<sup>o</sup> {So do I his}

—Launcelet  
 And they are planning something.<sup>10</sup> I will not say you shall see a masquerade party<sup>11</sup> but if you do,  
 then it was not for nothing that<sup>o</sup> my nose fell a-bleeding on Black<sup>o</sup> Monday last, at six o'clock  
 i'th'morning, falling out that year on Ash Wednesday, the fourth year in the afternoon.<sup>12</sup>  
 / then it must have been because // Easter

—Shylock  
 What, there's a masque?<sup>o</sup> Hear you me, Jessica, {What, are there masques?} / A masquerade?  
 Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum

---

4. {I am not bid for love. They flatter me}.  
 / I am not bid for friendship nor for love: | They seek to flatter me—and nothing more.  
 / I am not bid for love. They <only seek | To> flatter me, <to soften up the Jew.>

5. It is odd that, having previously said to Bassanio, 'I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you'[1.3.34], Shylock is now going to eat with him. His motivations, therefore, to eat with Bassanio—and go against his word—must be quite strong. Later he states that he is going 'in hate' to try and eat a lot (and therefore bankrupt the Christian) which is a comical excuse. (And this may be the same reasoning by which he gave his gormandizing servant to Bassanio). By all indications, however, Shylock is going because Antonio's closest friend, Bassanio, has offered him something by way of friendship (whereas, in the past, all he received from Antonio was scorn); Shylock also wants to be placed on an equal status with the Christians and wants Antonio to see him (Shylock) being commended by Bassanio.  
 In terms of anti-Semitism, Bassanio is clearly aloof to it. Bassanio, it seems, is somewhat friendly toward Shylock (and may even feel a debt of gratitude towards him) enough so to invite him over to his house for dinner that night. And the uncertain meaning of line 2.2.165 ['for I do feast tonight | My best-esteemed acquaintance'] could mean that Bassanio is throwing the feast for Shylock or that Shylock is the guest of honor.

6. / There is something about which is disturbing / There is something amiss, which ruins my peace

7. {For I did dream of money bags tonight}  
**tonight:** last night.  
 During Elizabethan times, a person's dreams were thought to portend an *opposite* occurrence in real life. Hence, Shylock's dream of money-bags (bags filled with money) portends its opposite—a loss of money. The contemporary understanding of dreams holds that the content of person's dream corresponds to some waking state occurrence rather than the opposite.

8. To realize the original meaning, an additional line was added.  
 / A sign which tells me of some loss to come. / An omen telling me of some great loss  
 / And all the bags were empty of their gold.

9. **reproach** (scolding, blame): error for *approach*. Shylock understands the term intended (*approach*) yet responds in kind to the word *reproach*.

10. {And they have conspired together}

11. {a masque}

12. Lancelot makes a confused and nonsensical prediction (using various signs and omens) as a way to mock—and also dismiss the validity of—Shylock's ill-boding dream. We have the impression that Launcelet is aware of the upcoming plan, which is contingent upon Shylock attending the feast, and therefore he does his best to get Shylock to accept the invitation.

And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,<sup>13</sup>  
 Do not climb you up to the windows then,<sup>14</sup>  
 Nor thrust your head into the public street  
 To gaze on Christian fools with varnished<sup>o</sup> faces:<sup>o</sup> / painted // colored masks  
 But plug<sup>o</sup> my house's ears—I mean my casements.<sup>o</sup> {stop} // windows  
 Let not the sound of mindless<sup>o</sup> fopp'ry<sup>o</sup> enter {shallow} / folly  
 My somber house. . . . By Jacob's staff<sup>15</sup> I swear  
 I have no mind<sup>o</sup> of feasting forth<sup>o</sup> tonight, / I've no desire // going out  
 But I will go.<sup>16</sup> [*To Launcelet*] Go you before me, then,<sup>17</sup>  
 Say I will come.

—Launcelet I will go before, sir.  
 [*aside to Jessica*] Mistress, look out the window for all this:  
 There will come a Christian by / There a Christian will come by,  
 Will be worth a Jewess eye / Worthy of a Jewess' eye.

*Exit*

—Shylock  
 What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?<sup>18</sup>

—Jessica  
 His words were, 'farewell mistress'—nothing more.

—Shylock

---

13. / And the vile squeals of the wry-necked fife-player

**fife:** a small, shrill-toned musical instrument resembling a flute and used mainly with drums to make music which would accompany marching. *Fife* as well as *drum* (mentioned in the previous line) could refer to the instrument or the musician playing the instrument. Hence, *drum* would be a reference to 'a drummer' and *fife* to 'a fife-player.'

**wry-necked fife:** refers to the image of a flute player who twists his neck and hold his head awry (bent to one side) while playing. McDonnell, however, believes that *the squealing of the wry-necked fife* might indicate the sound of the *wry neck*, a bird with a high-pitched call which writhes its head and neck, though this interpretation is a stretch. (In current literature, this line is often misquoted as: 'the vile *squeaking* of the wry-necked fife.')

14. {Clamber not you up top the casements then} / Do not arise and look ye out the window // Don't climb you up to the windows to look

15. {By Jacob's staff} This is not a Jewish saying. Jacob's thrift, however, is a characteristic admired by Shylock, and Shylock often identifies with this biblical character. A Jacob's staff referred to a pole which provided a firm foundation for a compass or astronomical instrument. Thus, "by Jacob's staff" would mean, "by that which supports me," or more loosely, "by my gut feeling."

16. We find no clear reason as to why Shylock is invited to dinner—unless out of Bassanio's gratitude for his having generously loaned him the money, gratis. The feast may be in honor of Shylock. Moreover, we do not know why Shylock consents to go, especially after having made the point, earlier that day, that he (as a Jew) would not eat with a Christian. [1.3.9-30] [See Additional Notes, 2.6.38]

17. {Go you before me, sirrah}

**sirrah:** a low (though not disparaging) term which is often used in reference to a servant. Portia also uses the term when addressing her servants [1.2.129]

18. **Hagar's offspring:** a negative reference to Ishmael, the foolish son of Abrahams's Egyptian concubine, Hagar. Hagar (and her son) left Abraham's house, complaining of his harsh treatment, and later they became outcasts. [Genesis 21:9-21] [See Additional Note, 2.5.43]

The patch<sup>19</sup> is kind enough, but a huge feeder.<sup>o</sup>  
 Snail-slow in working,<sup>o</sup> and he sleeps by day  
 More than the wildcat. Drones that do not work  
 Stay not in my hive.<sup>20</sup> Thus I part with him—<sup>o</sup>  
 Now to the Christian so he can help waste<sup>o</sup> <sup>21</sup>  
 His borrowed purse.<sup>o</sup> Well Jessica, go in,  
 Perhaps I will return immediately.<sup>o</sup> <sup>22</sup>  
 Do as I bid and<sup>o</sup> shut doors<sup>o</sup> after you:  
 Fast bind, fast find—  
 A proverb never stale in a thrifty mind. <sup>23</sup>

/ dolt / fool // eater  
 {profit} > producing anything  
 / let him go /give him up  
 / with whom he can waste  
 / funds / wealth  
 / return at once. So now  
 {you,} //close up

*Exit*

—Jessica  
 Farewell, and if my fortune be not crossed,  
 I have<sup>o</sup> a husband,<sup>o</sup> you a daughter lost. <sup>24</sup>

/ gain {a father}

*Exit, opposite door*

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19. **patch:** dolt, fool, clown. A term referring to the motley or ‘patchwork’ garb of professional fools. It might also refer to someone as worthless as a patch of cloth. The term is used in *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

20. {Drones hive not with me}

21. {To one that I would have him help waste} / And now to one with whom he can help waste} / Now to the Christian, so to help him waste

22. This is a mild threat for Jessica to stay put.

23. This common proverb, used from the fifteenth century onwards, means: ‘if you lock things up, then you will be able to keep hold of them.’ These are Shylock’s last words to his daughter—and they are mistaken. It turns out that the very opposite is true. [See Additional Notes, 2.6. 54]

24. {Farewell; and if my fortune be not crossed | I have a father, you a daughter lost.}

**I have a father:** refers to Jessica’s gaining a husband (who will take care of her like a new father); it could also indicate her gaining a ‘holy Father,’ through her marriage and conversion to Christianity, which involves the loss of her Jewish father and heritage.

**crossed:** she is hoping that her fortune be not *crossed* (i.e., that nothing will cross, thwart, or come in the way of her plan to marry Lorenzo and become a Christian). As it turns out, her fortune *is* crossed in that she is converting to Christianity, symbolized by the cross.

*Venice. Enter the maskers, Gratziano, Salarino, and Salanio.*<sup>1</sup>

—Gratziano

This is the window under<sup>o</sup> which Lorenzo {penthouse under} / balcony by  
Desired us to wait.<sup>o</sup> {make stand}

—Salarino His hour is past.<sup>o</sup> {is almost past}<sup>2</sup>

—Gratziano

It is<sup>o</sup> a marvel he out-dwells his hour,<sup>o</sup> / And 'tis // that he comes so late  
For lovers ever-run before the clock.

—Salarino

O, ten times faster fly the doves of Venus<sup>o</sup><sup>3</sup> {Venus' pigeons fly}  
To seal love's bond new made<sup>o</sup> than they are wont / To newly seal love's bond  
To keep their well-intentioned vows<sup>o</sup> intact.<sup>o</sup><sup>4</sup> / meaningful promise // unbroken

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1. The stage heading in Q1 reads: 'Enter the maskers, *Gratiano* and *Salerino*.' This stage heading is somewhat confusing, both in its reference to *Salerino* (which seems to indicate *Salarino* and not *Salerio*) and to 'the maskers,' which appears before the character names. Such an anomaly suggests an *ad hoc* change in the original text. We can assume that the original heading may have read 'Enter maskers' which indicated the entrance of Gratziano, Salarino, and Salanio. Thus, it is likely that a diligent typesetter, wanting to 'clarify' the text, later added the names of *Gratiano* and *Salerino* to the heading. The mistaken spelling of *Salarino* suggests that this name was not part of the original heading (but added later). Thus, with this 'partial' typesetter addition—the addition of *Salarino* and not *Salarino and Salanio*—most editors assume that Salanio (because he is not specifically listed) is absent from the scene. This, however, is unlikely since Salarino and Salanio were both part of the original planning and both, up til now, have always appeared together. The scene can be staged with one or both Sals present. In keeping with the prior action of the play, and the fact that Salarino and Salanio always appear together, both Salarino and Salanio are included in the scene. [See Additional Notes, 2.6.0]

2. The lines in Q1 appear as follows:

*Gra:* Desired us to make stand.

*Sal:* His hour is almost past.

*Gra:* And it is a marvel he outdwells his hour.

The first two lines are truncated yet, if combined, they would form a line too long for the standard meter. In addition, Salarino states that Lorenzo's hour is 'almost past' whereas Gratziano replies that he 'outdwells his hour.' The lines could remain as they stand, or they could be combined into one standard line.

*Gra:* Told us to wait.

*Lor:* His hour is almost past.<sup>o</sup>

/ all but past

*Gra:* It is a marvel he prolongs<sup>o</sup> his hour.

/ outdwells

3. **Venus' pigeons:** May refer to the pigeons that draw Venus's chariot (or carry Venus) though this image is 'very odd' and not consistent with any known mythology. Warburton holds that the original may have read *Venus' widgeons* (which refers to a kind of duck and suggests a wayward and silly bird) though such an emendation would offer no improvement upon the original. Most agree that the subject (the one who seals love's bond) refers to Venus and not to the pigeons that draw her. All said, *Venus' pigeons* probably refers neither to Venus nor her pigeons but should be taken as a metaphor for a somewhat inconsistent lover (a pigeon) who is smitten by love (Venus) and who runs fast to obtain the object of his desire.

/ O ten times faster fly love-stricken youths / Love-smitten youngers run ten times as fast / A wayward lover runs tens times as fast

4. {To keep obligèd faith unforfeited.}

**obligèd:** pledged, obligated

Salarino is claiming that lovers are very quick to enter a new bond of love (and make all kinds of pledges)—rushing in like the doves of Venus—yet are just as quick to break those same vows (when some other love interest emerges).

/ To keep intact their new-made obligations / To keep intact the vows already made / To keep their faith with vows already made [See Additional Notes, 2.6.7]

—Gratziano

That ever holds.° Who riseth from a feast / 'Tis always true  
With the keen° hunger of one sitting down? 5 / same  
Where is the horse that doth gallop° again {untread} / retread  
Another lap° with the unbated fire° {His tedious measures} // same kind of passion  
That he did pace the first? All things that are,  
Are with more spirit chasèd° than enjoyed. / vigor pursued  
How like a young man° or a prodigal {yunker}/ young son  
The bannered° ship<sup>6</sup> leaves from her native bay, 7 / lofty / splendid  
Hugged and escorted° by the forceful wind; 8 / embracèd / caresséd  
How like the prodigal doth she return  
With over-weathered° ribs and raggèd sails, / weather-beaten / a storm-beaten hull  
Lean, rent, and beggared by the forceful° wind! {strumpet} / heady / sturdy / ruthless

*Enter Lorenzo*

—Salanio 9

Here comes Lorenzo. More of this hereafter.

—Lorenzo

Sweet friends, your patience for° my long delay.° / forgive me for {abode}  
Not I, but my affairs have made you wait: 10  
When you shall please to play the thieves for wives° / a wife-stealer  
Then I will watch as long for you. Approach.° / Come here  
Here dwells my father<sup>11</sup> Jew. [*calling*] Hey!° Who's within? {Howe}

*Enter Jessica above, dressed as a boy*

—Jessica

Who are you? Tell me for more certainty / so I am assured / can be sure  
Although° I'll swear that I do know your voice.° {Albeit} > "all be it" / {tongue}

---

5. / With the keen appetite that he sits down? / With the same hunger as when he sat down?

6. / The proud vessel / The ship so proud

7. {The scarfed bark puts from her native bay} / The decorated ship leaves from her bay  
**scarfed:** refers to something wrapped or adorned with streaming banners, such as the side of a ship (*bark*) decorated with flags and steamers while it makes a glorious departure from her native port.

8. {the strumpet wind} / a good, strong wind

**strumpet:** refers to something inconsistent, something promising yet unreliable. The term brings to fore the metaphor of the Prodigal Son and the prostitutes (strumpets) upon whom he wasted his fortune. Here the promising wind is quick to bring one's ship out to sea and, later, it is that same wind that brings the ship to ruin.

9. In Q1 this speech heading is abbreviated as '*Sal.*' This could indicate either Salarino or Salanio (depending on which one is listed in the stage heading). Since both characters are present in the scene, and since both characters should have lines, Salanio is given this line. In terms of staging, Gratziano and Salarino might be lounging around, talking about the pigeons of Venus, while Salanio, who is not talking, first notices—and announces—Lorenzo's arrival.

10. Such tardiness would put this whole plan in jeopardy since the long delay would give Shylock ample time to return from dinner before Lorenzo's arrival. What more pressing affairs could have caused Lorenzo to be so late? Perhaps the delay was brought about by poor planning and last minute demands or because Lorenzo was waiting at Bassanio's feast to make sure Shylock was well situated before he departed.

11. **father:** future father-in-law.

—Lorenzo

Lorenzo—and thy<sup>o</sup> love.

/ your

—Jessica

Lorenzo, surely, and my love indeed—<sup>12</sup>

{ certain }

The one I love so much!<sup>o</sup> And now who knows

{ For who love I so much }

But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

—Lorenzo

Heaven and my thoughts are witness that thou art.

—Jessica

Here, catch this casket—it is worth the pains. <sup>13</sup>

I'm glad 'tis night so you don't look on me,

For I am much ashamed of my appearance.<sup>o</sup>

{ exchange }<sup>14</sup> / new look

But love is blind and lovers cannot see

The pretty<sup>15</sup> follies they themselves commit;<sup>o</sup>

/ petty // they're wont to commit

For if they could Cupid<sup>16</sup> himself would blush

To see me thus transformèd to a boy. <sup>17</sup>

/ transformed into

—Lorenzo

Come down,<sup>o</sup> for you must be my torchbearer. <sup>18</sup>

{ Descend }

—Jessica

What, must I hold a candle<sup>o</sup> to my shames?

/ bright flame

They are, good sooth, already too<sup>o</sup> too light.<sup>o</sup> <sup>19</sup>

/ far / much

---

12. / Lorenzo certainly, my love indeed

13. Stage direction: a) she throws down the chest filled with gold—which is painfully caught or b) she is about to throw down the chest but is urged by the group, gesturing “no,” to carry it down instead.

14. **exchange**: change of appearance (into a boy), transfiguration

15. {pretty} / artful / petty > comedic, ridiculous

16. Cupid, god of love, is often depicted as blind thus conveying the sense that love is blind, that it obeys the heart and not outer conditions. If, however, Cupid could see Jessica dressed as a boy it would be enough to make him blush.

17. / To see the way I've changed into a boy.

18. Lorenzo is using this image figuratively, as per the imagery enlisted in 2.4.22;39. He is saying, ‘you must be the one who brings light and radiance into my life; your light must lead my way in the world.’ This is in contradiction to Jessica’s wish to remain hidden under the cover of night.

19. {They in themselves, good sooth, are too too light} / They are, good heavens, already too light.

(my shames are) . . . **too too light**: a) much too apparent, evident, in full view; b) immodest, unethical.

*Light* can also mean being unfaithful (such as someone who is light in keeping her vows) though this is unlikely Jessica’s intended meaning. Later in the play (5.1.129) we hear Portia using the term light (meaning “unfaithful”) in this sense: *Let me give light, but let me know be light: / For a light wife doth make a heavy husband.*

**good sooth**: good truth. *In sooth* means, ‘in truth,’ ‘to tell you honestly,’ whereas *good sooth* is more akin to a light swearing, such as ‘good heavens,’ ‘good God,’ or ‘by God.’

Why, 'tis love's nature to remain in hiding,<sup>o</sup> 20 / concealed  
And I<sup>o</sup> should be concealed.<sup>o</sup> / I too {obscured}

—Lorenzo So are you, sweet,  
E'en<sup>21</sup> in the lovely<sup>o</sup> garnish<sup>o</sup> of a boy. / lowly<sup>22</sup> / outfit  
But come at once <and tarry you no further>:<sup>23</sup>  
For the cov'ring of night soon runs away<sup>o</sup><sup>24</sup> / will soon depart  
And we are stayed for<sup>o</sup> at Bassanio's feast.<sup>25</sup> / And we're expected

—Jessica  
I will make fast the doors, and guild myself<sup>26</sup>  
With some more ducats, and be with you straight.

*Exit above*

—Gratziano  
Now, by my word,<sup>o</sup> she's more gentile than Jew. {by my hood} / I do swear

—Lorenzo  
You can berate me if I do not love her<sup>27</sup>  
For she is wise—if I can be the judge;<sup>o</sup> {if I can judge of her}

---

20. {Why, 'tis an office<sup>o</sup> of discovery, love,} / a matter / a function  
/ Why, love is best when kept behind close doors.

Jessica is here reflecting some of her father's manner, desiring to keep things hidden behind closed doors.

21. {Even} To preserve the iambic meter, *even* would be pronounced as *e'en*.

22. **lowly**: Q1 has *lowely*, which is an old spelling of *lowly* but could also be read as *lovely*. *Lowly* does not quite fit, since the garb of a boy is not lowly: *lovely* ties in more closely with *sweet*, and would be said in playful jest, especially is light of Jessica's embarrassment.

23. {But come at once}. The line is truncated for no apparent reason and is likely in error. In Q1, these four syllables are added to the end of the previous line, thus producing a line with seven iambs (as opposed to five): {Even in the lovely garnish of a boy, but come at once}. This line could be preserved in its truncated form or emended with three additional iambs: / But come at once <and make no more delays>

24. {For the close night doth play the runaway} / The cov'ring night doth quickly run away

**close**: covered, secret; darkness

**play the runaway**: is fading quickly, is speeding by. This may also be a reference to Jessica, who is running away. This line generally refers to the cover of night playing the part of a runaway (and will soon be gone) but could also mean that the cover of night plays in favor of the runaway.

25. It seems that someone at Bassanio's feast is waiting for them. Thus they are urged to hurry in order to make a clean getaway before arousing suspicion (by their absence at the masque).

**stayed for**: waited for. The term *stay* (wait) also appears in 59 (*Our masquing mates by this time for us stay*) and 63 (*'Tis nine o'clock: our friends all stay for you*). [See Additional Notes, 2.6.48]

26. **guild myself**: provide myself with more ducats. It also carries the implication of dressing or gilding herself with more gold in the same way that an ornament might be gilded with gold.

Here again we see a conflict in Jessica: she wants to remain hidden (and not hold a candle to her shame), she wants her affections to remain behind closed doors, yet here she is gilding herself in gold and thereby putting herself in a position to be seen.

27. {Beshrew me but I love her heartily}

/ Forswear me if she is not my beloved / Reprove me but with all my heart I love her

**Beshrew me**: A mild swear akin to 'curse me' > derived from the injury that comes from the bite of a shrew.

**but**: if not, if I don't > "Let me be cursed (bitten by a shrew) if I don't love her heartily"

And fair she is—if that mine eyes be true;  
And true she is—as she hath proved herself;  
And therefore, like herself—wise, fair, and true—  
Shall she be carried<sup>o</sup> in my constant<sup>o</sup> soul.<sup>28</sup>

{placèd} / faithful / deepest

*Enter Jessica*

What, beauty art thou! ° Gentlemen, away,<sup>30</sup>  
Let us make ground<sup>o</sup> awhile the maskers play.<sup>31 32</sup>

/ What beauty has come  
/ make haste / depart / be gone

*Exeunt Lorenzo, Jessica, Salarino, and Salanio*

*Enter Antonio*<sup>33</sup>

—Antonio  
Who's there?

—Gratziano  
Signior Antonio?

—Antonio

---

28. / Shall she be carried, always, in my soul.

30. {What, are thou come! On gentlemen, away.}

**What, art thou come!** / How beautiful! > How beautifully thou art come!

/ What beauty has come! Gentlemen away

**on gentlemen away:** Q1 has {What, art thou come, on gentleman away} which many editions emend in the form of a question: 'What, are thou come? On, gentleman, away!' But who does the term "gentleman" (not gentlemen") refer to? Jessica is a boy, not a gentleman. F1 has: 'On gentlemen, away' which is more likely, as this term could refer to Salarino and Salanio, and also include Jessica in jest.

31. {What, art thou come! On, gentlemen, away | Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.}

/ . . . On gentlemen, away | Let's go before we cause too much dismay

/ . . . On gentlemen, let's go | Let us get far before our friend's e'er know.

**masquing mates:** fellow party-goers who will be at Bassanio's masquerade party. The masquing mates may be waiting for this group to arrive—yet it is unlikely that Lorenzo is going to the ball to meet them. The command 'on gentlemen' is more likely a prompting (along with 'For the close of night doth play the runaway') that they must make their getaway before their masquing mates notice they are not at the feast (and go out looking for them). Despite Lorenzo's excitement about having a torchbearer (someone to herald his entrance) the masque is the last place they want to be seen; the plan is to exit the city, under cover of night, while everyone is distracted with the masque. [See Additional Notes, 2.6.59]

32. In a later scene [2.8] Salarino tells Salanio of Bassanio's departure and so he alone (and not Salanio) must have gotten off the gondola and proceeded to the masque. Meanwhile Salanio helped Lorenzo and Jessica steal away from Venice (while everyone was busy with the masque).

Lorenzo's last line, 'Our masquing mates by this time for us stay,' should be taken as an indication to make haste, since 'by this time' their masquing mates (friends at the party) are waiting for their arrival and, as the hour grows late, they might go out looking for them, which might draw notice and suspicion. As it turns out, everyone at the masque became acutely aware that Gratziano was missing because 20 men were sent out in search of him.

33. The timing of Antonio's arrival, and his meeting with Gratziano near Shylock's house, is amiss. Antonio would not be going out in search of Gratziano with Bassanio's departure so immanent (for Antonio had already sent out 20 men to find him). Rather, Antonio would be eking out his time with Bassanio. [See Additional Notes, 2.6.60]

Fie° Gratziano! Where are all the rest? <sup>34</sup>  
'Tis nine o'clock; our friends all stay° for you.  
No masque tonight, the wind has come about, <sup>35</sup>  
And now Bassanio is° aboard his ship. <sup>36</sup>  
I have sent twenty out to seek for you.° <sup>37</sup>

{Fie, fie} / Damn it

/ wait

/ men to look for you.

—Gratziano

I'm glad of it:° I seek° no more delight,  
Than to be under sail and gone tonight. <sup>38</sup>

{I am glad on't} {desire} / wish

*Exeunt* <sup>39</sup>

---

34. {where are all the rest?} / where is everyone?

We are not sure whom Antonio is referring to when he says 'all the rest.' He might be inquiring about Lorenzo, Salarino, and Salanio, whom Antonio believed was with Gratziano all this time (and may have made for his delay) but Antonio, curiously, finds Gratziano all alone.

35. {No masque tonight, the wind is come about.} / No masque for you tonight—the wind has come

**no masque tonight:** one reading of this could indicate that the masquerade party, planned for that night, has been cancelled (due to Bassanio's departure) or that the masque was already over—both scenarios of which are unlikely. More likely, *no masque tonight* refers to no masque for Gratziano, as he must set sail immediately. It could also be played as a literal reference to the mask that Gratziano is wearing (which Antonio pulls off when he says *no masque tonight*—thus implying that Gratziano should take off the mask he is wearing, stop his fun and games, and attend to the task of readying himself for departure.

**the wind is come about:** the wind has turned favorable (which now allows Bassanio to make a swift departure to Belmont). From the foregoing action it appears that Bassanio borrows the money from Shylock in the morning, makes preparations in the afternoon, puts on a feast in the evening, and intends to depart the next day. Yet, the winds having turned favorable (and Bassanio impatiently wanting to get to Belmont without delay) he decides to depart immediately—right in the middle of his own feast. Owing to the fact that Portia has many known suitors, and any delay in Bassanio's trip to Belmont would diminish his chances of winning here, an immediate departure (the very same day as he acquires the money) is to be expected. Nor does Bassanio tarry a while in Belmont, as suggested by Portia: he moves to making a choice the day he arrives. The time frame implicated by the action is, of course, not consistent with Shylock's bond, which is for three months; Bassanio hears of the expiration of Shylock's bond the very day he arrives in Belmont.

36. {Bassanio presently will go aboard} / Bassanio now awaits aboard his ship / And now Bassanio's ship will go abroad

37. Antonio says that the wind has come about—which prompts Bassanio to make a hasty departure, right in the middle of the party he is throwing—yet wind is not a factor in travel to Belmont: throughout the play, people go back and forth between Venice and Belmont without any need of favorable wind. Bassanio would have left at the first available opportunity, wind or no wind. [See Additional Notes, 2.6.66]

38. Gratziano, the ultimate party man, would have little reason to delight upon hearing that the masque was cancelled unless there was something greater he desired, which could only be found on Belmont.

39. In the Kean production of 1858, Jessica is swept away by Lorenzo and departs in a whirl of carnival figures. Straight after, Shylock makes an entrance and a slow walk across the stage; he then knocks twice on the door to his house and there is no answer. A long silence follows and then the curtain falls. Some productions have Shylock enter his house, and sensing the ill-brood of Jessica's absence, cries out her name—with no answer.

*Portia's house at Belmont.*

*A flourish of cornetts.<sup>1</sup> Enter Portia and the Prince of Morocco, with their attendants*

—Portia [*to servant*]

Go, draw aside the curtains and disclose<sup>o</sup> {discover} / reveal  
The triple<sup>o</sup> caskets for this noble prince. {several} / choice of

*The curtains are drawn aside and three caskets are revealed*

Now make your choice.

*The Prince examines each one*

—Morocco

The first of gold, which<sup>o</sup> this inscription bears:<sup>2</sup> {who}

‘Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.’

The second, silver, which this promise carries:

‘Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.’

The third, dull lead, with warning all<sup>o</sup> as blunt: / just

‘Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.’<sup>3</sup>

[*to Portia*] How shall I know if I do chose the right?<sup>o</sup> / right one

—Portia

The one of them contains my picture, Prince;  
If you choose that, then all of mine is yours.<sup>o4</sup> {then I am yours withal}

—Morocco

Some god direct my judgement. Let me see—

I will survey<sup>o</sup> th’ inscriptions once<sup>o</sup> again. / inspect {back}

What says this leaden casket?

‘Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.’

Must give, for what? For lead? Hazard<sup>o</sup> for lead? / Risk all

This casket threatens: Men that<sup>o</sup> hazard all / who

1. Some editors, following Capell, add the stage direction here to signify Morocco’s entrance. However, Morocco’s arrival has already been announced, and he is already in residence. Some editors also add [*flourish of cornetts*] at the end of the scene, with Morocco’s exit, which is also unlikely.

2. / The first of gold, which offers<sup>o</sup> this inscription: / presenting / deliv’ring

3. The inscriptions on the caskets, found in the source story, *Gesta Romanorum*, (1595), are as follows:

Gold: *Who so chooseth me shall find what he deserves.*

Silver: *Who so chooseth me shall find what his nature desires.*

Lead: *Who so chooseth me shall find what God has disposed for him.* [See Additional Notes, 2.7.9]

4. **withal**: “with all.” I am yours withal; I am all yours, all of what is mine is yours  
/ If you chose that, then I am wholly yours

Do so in hope of some untoward advantage.<sup>5</sup> / unseemly gain / of undeservèd gain  
 A golden mind stoops not to petty<sup>6</sup> schemes. / lowly  
 I'll neither<sup>7</sup> give nor hazard all<sup>8</sup> for lead. {I'll then nor} {aught}  
 What says the silver with her virgin<sup>9</sup> hue? / moonlike  
 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'  
 As much as he deserves. Pause<sup>10</sup> there Morocco / stay / stop  
 And weigh thy value with an even<sup>11</sup> hand. / a steady  
 If thou be<sup>12</sup> valued<sup>13</sup> by thine worthiness,<sup>8</sup> {be'st} {rated}  
 Thou dost deserve enough<sup>9</sup>—and yet 'enough'  
 May not extend so far as to the lady.  
 And yet to be afraid<sup>10</sup> of my deserving<sup>11</sup> {afear'd} // fear what I truly deserve  
 Would be<sup>12</sup> a weak disabling<sup>13</sup> of myself.<sup>10</sup> {Were but} // debasing / discredit  
 'As much as I deserve'<sup>14</sup>—why, that's the lady!  
 I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,  
 In graces,<sup>15</sup> and in qualities of breeding<sup>16</sup>—<sup>11</sup> / In manner // in royal ancestry  
 But more than these, in love I do deserve.<sup>12</sup> / deserve her  
 What if I strayed no further,<sup>13</sup> but chose here?  
 Let's see, once more, this saying 'graved<sup>14</sup> in gold:  
 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'  
 Why that's the lady! All the world desires her.  
 From the four corners of the earth they come  
 To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint.<sup>12</sup>  
 The Persian deserts<sup>13</sup> and the vasty wilds<sup>14</sup> / wilderness / barren wild  
 Of wide Arabia are as thoroughfares now  
 For every prince to come and view fair Portia.  
 The wat'ry kingdom<sup>15</sup> whose high-reaching wave<sup>16</sup>  
 Spits<sup>15</sup> in the face of heaven, is no bar<sup>16</sup> / raging ocean {ambitious head}  
 / barrier // cannot block

5. {Do it in hope of fair advantages}

**fair advantages:** gaining something not fully deserved

/ Do so in hope of quick and feeble gain

6. {A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross}

**shows of dross:** worthless displays

7. **virgin hue:** 'silver is the color of the moon, and Diana, the virgin goddess, is the moon's goddess.' (Kittredge)

8. {estimation} / reputation / own repute

9. / If estimated by mine worthiness | I do deserve enough

10. / Would be to lower and debase myself / Would be to weaken and debase my value

11. **qualities of breeding:** more suggestive of Arabian horses than a royal bloodline. This is an image favored by Morocco but may be ill-suited for European sentiments.

12. **this shrine:** a container for the relics (and/or bones) of a saint. Morocco refers to the Portia as a *shrine*—an object of worship—but, realizing that a shrine may also refer to a tomb, which contains a dead saint, quickly corrects himself with a modifier, calling Portia, a 'mortal breathing saint.'

13. {The Hyrcanian deserts and vasty wilds} / The unrelenting deserts and vast wilds

Q1 = 'vastie'; F1 = 'vast.'

**Hyrcania:** an area south of the Caspian Sea known for its wilderness.

14. {The wat'ry kingdom, whose ambitious head}

**ambitious head:** / high-reaching waves

15. **spits:** the image of a wave's crest spewing water into the air

16. {is no bar} / has no chance / is no barrier  
/ cannot slow / cannot stymie | Nor stop

To stop these dauntless suitors,<sup>o</sup> who but leap<sup>o</sup> {foreign spirits}<sup>17</sup> {but they come}  
 <Across her vast expanse,> as o'er<sup>o</sup> a brook, / 'twere  
 To catch one sight<sup>o</sup> of the fair Portia.<sup>18</sup> / glimpse  
 One of these three contains her heavenly picture.  
 Is't like<sup>o</sup> that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation / Could't be  
 To think so base a thought. It is<sup>o</sup> too gross<sup>o</sup> <sup>19</sup> {were} / It is abhorrent  
 That she be wrapped in common cerecloth  
 Like one who's buried in the obscure grave.<sup>20</sup> / one interred in the forgotten  
 Or shall I think in silver she's immured<sup>o</sup> / enclosed / contained  
 Which holds one-tenth the value<sup>o</sup> of tried<sup>o</sup> gold? {Being ten time undervalued} / true / pure  
 O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem  
 Was set in worse<sup>o</sup> than gold. They have in England / less > anything less valuable  
 A coin that bears the figure of an angel  
 Stamped in gold; but that's insculpted upon <sup>o</sup> <sup>21</sup> <sup>22</sup> / engraved upon  
 The surface—here an angel lies within!<sup>23</sup>  
 I will stop here—deliver me the key;  
 Here I do choose and thrive as I may be.<sup>24</sup> <sup>25</sup>

—Portia

There, take it, prince. And if my form lie there,  
 Then I am yours.

*Morocco unlocks the golden casket*

17. **foreign spirits:** men of courage and determination (who hail from foreign lands).

18. {As o'er a book to see fair Portia}

19. / It is revolting / obscene / repugnant / unthinkable

20. {To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave}

**cerecloth:** waxed cloth that corpses were wrapped in for burial

**obscure:** a) dark, distant b) common, undistinguished, forgotten

It is an insult to think that she (her image) could be found in lead or wrapped in a wax cerecloth, both of which suggest the status of a commoner—one who gets buried in an obscure or unmarked grave.

21. **insculpted upon:** engraved upon the surface. This obscure word is found in the English translation of *Gesta Romanorum*, the source from which the Author borrowed the casket story: 'The third vessel was made of lead, full within of precious stones, and thereupon was insculpt this posey: *Who so chooseth me, shall find what God has disposed for him.*' [See Additional Notes, 2.7.9]

22. /Could e'er be set<sup>o</sup> in something worse than gold. / Was ever set

There is<sup>o</sup> a coin in England, stamped in gold, / They have

That bears the figure of a rad'ant angel

But that's insculped on<sup>o</sup> the outer surface;<sup>o</sup> / engraved upon

23. It is the picture of Portia, representing Portia, which lies within.

24. / Here I do choose, deliver me the key | And let my fortune fall as it may be.

/ Deliver me the key and straight away | Here do I choose and prosper as I may

25. The original reads:

{Stamped in gold, but that's insculped upon;

But here an angel in a golden bed

Lies all within. Deliver me the key.

Here I do choose, and thrive as I may.}

The word *key* may have been pronounced *kay* and thus the intent of the original was for Morocco's speech to end in a final rhyme. Bassanio's speech before the caskets ended in a rhyme scheme but not Arragon's: Arragon's last line ends with *here*, rhyming with Portia's next line, ending with *there*. With Morocco, we find Portia's first line (after Morocco chooses) ending with *there* with Morocco's following line ending with *here*.

—Morocco      O hell! What have we here?  
A hideous skull,<sup>o</sup> within whose empty eye  
There is a written scroll. I'll read the writing:

*All that glitters<sup>o</sup> is not gold;  
Often have your heard that<sup>o</sup> told.  
Many a man his life hath sold,  
For the<sup>o</sup> outside<sup>o</sup> to behold,  
Gilded tombs<sup>o26</sup> do worms enfold.<sup>o</sup>  
Had you been as wise as bold,  
Young in limbs, in<sup>o</sup> judgement old,  
Your answer had not been<sup>o</sup> inscrolled—  
Fair you well, your suit is cold.*

{ A carrion death }

{ *glisters* } / glistens

/ *this*

{ *But my* } / *Just the* / *Only*

/ *graves* { *infol* }

/ *but* > but in

/ *fate would not be so*

'Tis cold indeed,<sup>o</sup> and labor lost.  
Now<sup>o</sup> farewell heat and welcome frost.<sup>27 28</sup>  
Portia<sup>o</sup> I have too grieved a heart  
For tedious leave,<sup>o</sup> and so I part.<sup>o29</sup>

{ Cold indeed }

{ Then }

/ And here

/ For long 'good-bye's // thus I depart

*Exit with his attendants*<sup>30</sup>

—Portia  
A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go—  
Let all of his complexion<sup>o</sup> choose me so.<sup>31</sup>

/ vainglory

*Exeunt*

---

26. Q1 reads: *Gilded timber do worms infold*. To rectify the meter, most editions follow Johnson's emendation and change *timber* to *tombs*. Rowe, however corrects the meter by replacing *timber* with *wood*—which is close in meaning to the supposed original. *Timber* refers to a wood coffin that is gilded on the outside but which decays and soon becomes enfolded with worms. A *tomb* (which is associated with stone) is unlikely to be gilded or enfolded with worms. Thus *tombs* equals *timber* which equals *coffin*.

27. { Cold indeed and labour lost | Then farewell heat, and welcome frost }

Morocco's first two lines follow the same rhyme scheme as the scroll (which is also the case with the lines spoken by Arragon and Bassanio after the scroll); his next two lines, however, revert back to the standard iambic meter. This anomaly produces a rhythmic break between the meter of Morocco's first rhyming pair and his second. The four lines could be left as is, with the different meters (8-8-10-10) or one could preserve the meter of the first two lines, and conform the next two lines to the same meter (8-8-8-8). Less likely, the first lined pair could conform with the second, having all four lines in iambic pentameter—yet this would not be consistent with the post-scroll meter found in Arragon and Bassanio.

28. This is a paraphrased inversion of the old proverb, 'Farewell, frost': "Therefore are you so foule, and so, farewell, frost." (Lilly's *Mother Bombe*); "Farewell, frost, will you needes be gone" (Wapull's *Tyde Taryeth No Man*, 1576)

29. { *Portia*, adieu, I have too grieved a heart: | To take a tedious leave, thus losers part. }  
/ To stay a long good-bye—and thus I part.

30. Some editions add | *flourish of cornetts* | as part of this stage direction. This direction is not found in any of the quartos. Morocco has just lost the contest and is leaving in disgrace—hardly the kind of exit one would want to herald with cornetts. If a flourish of cornetts was added here, it would have to be unconvincing, deflated, and, comedic—and perhaps quashed in midstream by a sensitive gentleman from Portia's train.

31. **complexion**: most notably refers to Morocco's dark complexion (and Portia's dislike of it). If one wants to interpret this in a politically correct way, the reference could refer to Morocco's manner or disposition (as the term *complexion* can also have this meaning, as it does in [3.1.28]).

/ For such good riddance, I have fate to blame, | May all with his vainglory chose the same.

*Venice. Enter Salarino and Salanio.* <sup>1</sup>

—Salarino

Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail,  
With him is Gratziano gone along.  
I'm sure Lorenzo is not on their ship.<sup>o</sup>

/ And Gratziano's gone along with him  
/ has not gone with them

—Salanio

The villain Jew with outcries roused<sup>o</sup> the Duke,  
Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.<sup>2</sup>

{raised} / woke

—Salarino

He came too late; the ship was under sail.<sup>o</sup>  
But there the Duke was giv'n<sup>o</sup> to understand  
That seen together, in a gondola,  
Were young Lorenzo and his amorous love.<sup>o</sup> <sup>3</sup>  
Besides, Antonio assured<sup>o</sup> the Duke  
They were not with Bassanio in his ship.<sup>4</sup>

/ had just left port  
/ made  
/ his Jessica  
{certified} / well-assured

—Salanio

I never heard an outburst<sup>o</sup> so confused,  
So strange, outlandish,<sup>o</sup> and so oddly spoke<sup>o</sup> <sup>5</sup>  
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:  
[*mimicing*] 'My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!  
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!<sup>6</sup>  
Justice! The law! My ducats and my daughter!  
A sealèd bag, two sealèd bags of ducats,  
Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!  
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,<sup>7</sup>  
Stol'n by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl!

{a passion}  
{outrageous} / excessive // dissident

1. This portion of the text, where the two Sals are talking to each other (and filling in crucial details about the main characters) shows why two similar characters were added to the text (as part of a later draft). The function of these two characters has no bearing on the action of the play; their function is to inform the audience with respect to unseen action involving the main characters. [For an further discussion of the names, See Additional Notes, 2.8.0]

2. Only someone of considerable influence (and in utter desperation) could wake the Duke and summon him from his house to investigate a minor incident.

3. / That someone saw Lorenzo, and his love | Jessica, fleeing in a gondola.

4. / That they were not aboard Bassanio's ship

5. **so oddly spoke:** {so variable} / conflicted, out of whack, disparate, discordant

6. **my Christian ducats:** this line seems to be part of Shylock's repetitive, somewhat incoherent, free-association rant about his daughter: {'My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter! | | Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!}. Since it follows the line, "Fled with a Christian" it likely means that his ducats have also fled with a Christian and now are ducats possessed by a Christian. This line echoes a line found in Marlow's play, *The Jew of Malta*. [See Additional Note, 2.8.15].

7. **two rich and precious stones:** Later there is a reference to a diamond purchased in Frankfort for 2000 ducats [3.1.80] but we do not know what the second stone might be; it could be the turquoise ring, which Shylock references later, but it is unlikely that he would refer to the ring as a precious stone.

She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats!’

—Salarino

Why, all the boys in Venice follow him  
Crying, ‘His stones, his daughter, and his ducats!’

—Salanio

Let good Antonio look to keep<sup>o</sup> his day.<sup>o</sup> {look he keep} // forfeit not  
Or he shall pay for this.

—Salarino Ay,<sup>o</sup> well remembered<sup>o</sup>—

I conversed<sup>o</sup> with a Frenchman yesterday {Marry} // By Mary  
Who told me, in the narrow seas that part {I reasoned} / I’d spoken  
The French and English,<sup>8</sup> there did overturn<sup>o</sup> / dividing / between  
A vessel of our country, fraught with riches.<sup>o</sup> {miscarriéd} / overturnéd  
I thought about<sup>o</sup> Antonio when he told me,<sup>9</sup> {richly fraught}  
And wished in silence that it were not his. {upon}

—Salanio

You’re<sup>o</sup> best to tell Antonio what you hear;<sup>o</sup> {You are} / ‘Tis / heard  
Yet do it gently, else it<sup>o</sup> may grieve him. {Yet do not suddenly, for it}

—Salarino

A kinder gentleman treads not<sup>o</sup> this earth: / man walks not upon  
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.<sup>10</sup>  
Bassanio told him he would make some speed  
Of his return. Antonio said, ‘Do not;<sup>o</sup>’<sup>11</sup> / No, no  
Rush not your heart<sup>o</sup> for my sake, Bassanio,<sup>12</sup>  
But stay until the time has fully ripened.<sup>o</sup><sup>13</sup> / ripening of time  
As for the Jew’s bond which he hath of me,  
Let it not enter in your mind or heart:<sup>o</sup> {of love}  
Be joyous<sup>o</sup> and employ<sup>o</sup> your chiefest<sup>o</sup> thoughts<sup>14</sup> {merry} // engage /// highest

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8. / England and France

9. / I thought it might be good Antonio’s ship

10. From this account we understand that Salarino was present at Bassanio’s departure while Salanio was not.

11. {Of his return. He answered, ‘Do not so’}

/ Bassanio told him he’d return with haste. | To which Antonio said, “Do not do so”;

12. {Slumber not business for my sake, Bassanio}

Q1 has the term *slumber* which Q2, F, and virtually all modern editors emend as *slubber*.

**slubber:** to perform with haste and/or with lack of care; sully, spoil, ruin

**slubber not business:** don’t rush or hurry with your affairs

**slumber not business:** ‘don’t sleep on the job’; be attentive to the task at hand. In modern English, the term *slumber* is readily recognized (and would be understood in the context of Antonio’s statement) whereas the term *slubber* is not. This uncommon term might bring up associations with such words as *slobber* or *blubber*.

13. {But stay the very riping of the time}

14. / Be joyous; let your only<sup>o</sup> concern be / foremost

To courtship and° such fair ostents° of love<sup>15</sup> / To win her with // displays  
 As shall most fittingly° become° you there.’<sup>16</sup> {conveniently} // come to  
 And then, right there,° his eyes aflow° with tears, {And even there} / adorned  
 He turned his face and put his arms around him,<sup>18</sup>  
 And with affection, so fully displayed,<sup>19</sup> expressed / apparent / evident  
 He kissed Bassanio’s cheek, and so° they parted.<sup>20 21</sup> / thus

—Salanio  
 His only love in this world is for him.<sup>22</sup>  
 I pray thee, let us go and find Antonio° {find him out}  
 To quicken° his embracèd heaviness<sup>23</sup> / lighten  
 With some delight or other.° / and laughter

—Salarino So we shall.° {Do we so} / Let us go

### Exeunt

15. {To courtship and such fair ostents of love}  
**fair ostents of love:** / fair displays of love / fair showings of love  
**ostent:** a shortened form of *ostentation*. *Ostents*, as used here, means to show or display, whereas the term *ostentation* carries the meaning of a grand, pompous, or even pretentious display.
- 16./ As shall arise in your heart when you’re there  
 At this point, Antonio still believes that Bassanio is going to Belmont in order to win Portia in a conventional scenario, which would involve wooing and courtship, and ‘fair ostents of love,’ that, in order to fully ripen, might takes days, weeks, or even months. Thus, Antonio is putting Bassanio’s needs, and his desire to woo Portia, above his very life. Antonio was never told of the true nature of Bassanio’s venture which involved a chance drawing of caskets not a typical courtship. (As Bassanio already knew, he would not spend even a day showing fair ostents of love to Portia; he would choose a casket the day he arrived in Belmont.)
18. {Turning his face, he put his hand behind him}  
 This image painted by Salarino suggests that Antonio says ‘good-bye’ to Bassanio and then puts his hand behind him in an affectionate, half-embrace. Alternatively, it might indicate that Antonio says ‘good-bye’ to Bassanio, turns his face to go, but wanting one final touch, Antonio (without looking back) puts his hand behind himself, and reaches back to touch Bassanio. The first image suggests that Antonio half-embraces Bassanio and then wrings his hand; the second image suggests that Antonio reaches back and wrings Bassanio’s hand.
19. {And with affection wondrous sensible} / And with his love so fully evident  
**wondrous sensible:** amazingly evident (to the senses)
20. {He wrung Bassanio’s hand, and so they parted}  
 It seems unlikely that this ‘amazingly evident display of affection’ would culminate with a regular handshake, after such displays as hugging and kissing were over. More likely, it indicates one, last desperate attempt to touch Bassanio, however so slight, by Antonio. To simplify this image, the handshake was replaced with a kiss.
21. /And even there, among the onlookers,  
 His eyes were big with tears. Turning his face,  
 He put his arms around him, then with great  
 Affection, showing wondrous emotion
22. {I think he only loves the world for him}  
 / I think his only love in life is him. / I think Bassanio is the world to him.
23. / And steal the sorrow he doth now embrace

*Belmont. Enter Nerissa and a Servant*

—Nerissa

Quickly, I pray thee—draw the curtain straight.<sup>o 1</sup> / open  
 The Prince of Arragon has ta'en his oath  
 And comes at once to make his choice of caskets.<sup>2</sup>

*A servant draws back the curtain, revealing the three caskets.*

[*A flourish of cornetts.*]

*Enter the Prince of Arragon, Portia, and attendants*

—Portia

Behold, there stand the caskets, noble Prince.  
 If you chose that wherein my picture's found,<sup>o 3</sup> {I am contained}  
 Straightaway shall we take<sup>o</sup> our nuptial vows.<sup>4</sup> / Then straightaway we'll take  
 But should you fail, without another word,<sup>o</sup> / more speech, my lord  
 My lord, you must depart<sup>o</sup> from hence at once.<sup>o 5</sup> / be gone

—Arragon

I am enjoined<sup>o</sup> by oath to observe three things: / obliged > obligated, bound  
 First, never to disclose<sup>o</sup> to anyone {unfold} / reveal  
 Which casket 'twas I chose. Next, if I fail  
 Of the right casket, never in my life<sup>6</sup>  
 To join<sup>o</sup> a maid by way of marriage. Lastly, {woo}  
 If I do fail<sup>o</sup> in fortune of my choice,  
 Immediately to leave you and be gone.<sup>7</sup>

—Portia

To these injunctions<sup>o</sup> everyone doth swear<sup>8</sup> / conditions  
 Who comes to hazard for my worthless<sup>o</sup> self.<sup>9</sup> / lowly

—Arragon

---

1. / Quickly, draw back the curtain straight away / Quickly now, draw the curtain straight away

**straight:** right away / straight away

2. {And comes to his election presently}

3. /And should you choose the one containing me

4. {Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized} / Straight shall we go to church and there be married

5. / You must be gone from hence immediately

6. / To chose the right casket, ne'er in my life

7. / To leave at once<sup>o</sup> and forever be gone. / forthwith

8. / These are the terms to which all men must swear

9. **worthless:** insignificant, less than worthy (when compared to the worth of these great suitors).  
 This is a false show of modesty.

And so am I obligèd.<sup>10</sup> Fortune now  
 To my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead:  
 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'  
 You shall possess more beauty<sup>o</sup> than mere lead<sup>11 12</sup> / value  
 Ere I should<sup>o</sup> give or hazard all on you. / Before I  
 What says the golden chest? Ah,<sup>o</sup> let me see: {Ha}  
 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.'  
 What 'many men desire' may indicate<sup>o 15 16</sup> / may but suggest / may refer to  
 The foolish multitudes<sup>o</sup> that choose by show; {fool multitude} / ignorant masses  
 Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach<sup>o 17</sup> / than what fond eye teaches  
 Which pries<sup>o</sup> not inwardly<sup>o</sup> but like the martlet<sup>18</sup> / looks / seeks {to the 'interior}  
 Does build its nest upon the outer wall  
 <Therein exposing it to harsh conditions><sup>19</sup>  
 And perhaps even<sup>o</sup> hazard and disaster.<sup>20</sup> / And in the way  
 I will not chose what many men desire  
 Because I will not jump<sup>o21</sup> with common spirits<sup>o 22</sup> / join // common sorts  
 And rank<sup>o</sup> me with the barbarous multitudes.<sup>23</sup> / class / judge  
 Now then, to thee, thou silver treasure-house,  
 Tell me once more what title<sup>o</sup> thou dost bear:<sup>o</sup> / saying // inscription thou bear  
 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'  
 And well said too! For who shall go about<sup>o</sup> / For what man shall attempt  
 To cozen<sup>o</sup> fortune by a show of honor<sup>24</sup> / To cheat one's / Beguiling

10. {And so I have addressed me} / And thus have I so pledged / And thus I've taken the vows

**addressed me:** I have addressed (and fulfilled) these injunctions by taking the required vows.

11. The original line {You shall look fairer ere I give or hazard} is here split into two lines, making it clear that Arragon is referring to the plainness of the casket and not Portia. Some productions have Arragon address this line toward Portia, thus punctuating his arrogance and suggesting that she would have to possess more beauty before he would hazard and risk all on her. But he is risking all on her. So, such a direction is misplaced.

12. Arragon dismisses the lead casket in one line saying, you must look more beautiful before I would risk everything on you. {You shall look fairer ere I give or hazard}. Hence, he makes his decision based upon looks and not consideration of the inscription. Then, ironically, the bulk of his speech is dedicated to condemning those who judge by outer appearance and the 'fool multitude that choose by show.'

15. / And yet that 'many' may well indicate

16. The original reads: {What many men desire? That 'many' may be meant | By the fool multitudes}. The line is competent enough but contains an additional (and superfluous iamb); it is unlikely that the learned Arragon would stray from the standard meter where there was no reason to do so. The original most likely would have read: *'What many men desire' may be meant*—with Arragon referring back to the last portion of the inscription ('what many men desire') rather than one word ('many'). In this version, the standard meter has been preserved.

17. / Not seeing past the fondness of their eyes / Not seeing past what attracts their attention

**fond eyes:** that which is attractive to the eye and which appeals to the outer senses (and thereby lacking true inner vision and wisdom)

18. {martlet}: a bird, probably referring to the house-martin or swift

19. / Exposing it to hazardous conditions

20. {Even in the force and road of casualty}

/ And well upon the highway to disaster / Which is the road unto harm and casualty / Putting itself in danger and in harm's way / E'en at the risk of injury and death / Subject to hazard, danger, and destruction

[See Additional Notes, 2.9.29]

21. / Because I won't commune / Because I shalln't conspire

22. {Because I will not jump with common spirits}

**jump with:** run the same course as, be in agreement with, be associated with, be allied with, etc.

23. / And be so ranked with the barbarous masses / And have me ranked with the ignorant hordes

24. / and to show one's honor

Without the seal° of merit? Let none presume  
 To wear an undeservèd dignity.°  
 O that one's status, wealth, and high position<sup>25</sup>  
 Were not derived corruptly;° and that true° honor / by falsehood {clear} / bright  
 Were rightly earned by those who deem to wear it.<sup>26 27</sup>  
 How many then should be without their crowns!°<sup>28 29</sup> / medals  
 How many that command would be commanded!  
 How much low peasantry<sup>30</sup> would then be gleaned° / culled // could we extract  
 From those of noble birth;°<sup>31</sup> and how much honor / royal blood  
 Amply bestowed° upon° our dignitaries / Decorated // Amply awarded to  
 Would be but varnish? Well, but to my choice:<sup>32</sup>  
 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.'  
 I will lay claim to all that I deserve. / I will assume what I rightly deserve  
 Give me a key t'unlock my fortunes here.<sup>33 34</sup> / I choose the silver chest. Give me a key

25. {O, that estates, degrees, and offices} / O that position, wealth, and higher office  
**estates:** a) one privilege, one's position, b) one's wealth, one's fortune, what one owns  
**degrees:** rank, position
26. {Were purchased° by the merit of the wearer} / procured  
 / Were found upon the worth of those who wear it.
27. / Were not obtained through some corrupted° means; / deceitful  
 And that true honor were justly bestowed  
 In accord with the worth of those who wear it.
28. {How many then should cover that stand bare!}  
**cover:** succeed, be covered with the dress of success, wear (cover themselves with) a suit of dignity  
**that:** who now  
**stand bare:** a) those who have nothing, who stand naked (without wealth or honor), b) the bare head of servants, who do not wear a hat in the presence of their masters.  
 a) How many then (if rank and position were not derived corruptly) should cover their bare heads—as they do now—with hats or crowns, to signify their true honor?—none.  
 b) How many then should keep their hats on (cover their heads) when those of presumed rank passed by?—everyone. (No one would doff his hat as a sign of respect).  
 / All would have covered heads as they pass by / All would keep their hats on as they pass by  
 c) How many, then, would succeed that now have nothing? How many, then, who now stand bare (without recognition) would be covered with medals (signifying honor)?—a few. [See Additional Notes, 2.9.43]
29. The next six lines are somewhat vague and the metaphors used are inconsistent but their intent is clear: Arragon is saying that those who now have honor are not deserving of it (and that the honor they show was derived corruptly). Two of the lines, however, could be interpreted more amicably: one could mean that among those who are low (with bare heads) some are worthy and could wear the hats normally worn by dignitaries (signifying honor); the other, that among the 'chaff and ruin' some are truly honorable—and could be made to appear that way with the right exterior coating (varnish). For the most part, however, the lines reflect Arragon's view that those who are currently in the place of honor are undeserving of it, thereby convincing himself that he alone is deserving of both honor and Portia. Not.
- In an attempt to rectify the metaphor (and preserve its agricultural references) Bailey (1862) emends the passage as follows: 'How much low *peasant's rye* would then be *screen'd* | From the true seed of honor! and how much *seed* | Pick'd from the chaff and *strewings* of the *temse* | To be new *garner'd* ! (*Temse* refers to a kind of sieve). Bailey notes that the term *peasantry* is not found in any of Shakespeare's other dramas. [See Additional Notes, 2.9.48]
30. {How much low peasantry would then be gleaned}  
 Q reads, 'how much low peasantry,' whereas F reads, 'how much low pleasantry.'  
**low peasantry:** lowliness, low rank or conduct of a peasant  
**low pleasantry:** low remarks of humor; low courteous remarks; lip service, facetiousness
31. {From the true seed of honor} / From so-called 'noblemen'
32. [See Additional Notes, 2.9.48]
33. {I will assume desert. Give me a key for this | And instantly unlock my fortunes here}  
 / I choose the silver casket—now the key / I will assume desert—give me the key  
 | To claim my prize for all the world to see / To claim my prize and my fortune to be
34. Morocco's final line {O hell! What have we here} [2.7.62] rhymes with Portia's previous line, ending with "there." Likewise, Aragon's final line, ending with "here," rhymes with Portia's next line ending with "there." Bassanio's soliloquy ends with the standard rhyme scheme. These rhyme schemes could be "corrected" but this break in the rhyme scheme indicates that both Morocco and Aragon have been cut short.
- Unlike Morocco's soliloquy, Arragon makes no mention of Portia, only himself. Morocco mentions both himself and the lady. Bassanio mentions neither himself nor the lady.

*He opens the silver casket and pauses*

—Portia

Too long a pause for that which you find there.<sup>o</sup> / you do see / would agree

—Arragon

What's here? The portrait of a blinking<sup>o</sup> idiot. / dull-eyed

Presenting me a schedule.<sup>o</sup> I will read it. / with a scroll

How much unlike art thou to Portia!

How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!

'Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves.'<sup>37</sup>

Did I deserve no more than a fool's head!

Is that my prize? Are my deserts<sup>o</sup> no better? > Is what I deserve

—Portia

By your own hand, O Prince, your choice was made;<sup>o</sup><sup>38</sup> / you made your choice

Can<sup>o</sup> I be judge of that?<sup>o</sup><sup>39 40</sup> / Need // I need not be the judge

—Arragon

And what is here?

*Five times fire did burn<sup>o</sup> this;*<sup>41 42</sup> {try} > purify

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37. Arragon misquotes the inscription which suggests that he is recalling it not actually reading it.

38. / By your own hand, you have rendered a verdict / By your own choice, O prince, you gave a verdict

39. {To offend and judge are distinct offices | And of opposèd natures.}

One who offends (who shows such arrogance) cannot now be in a position to judge or give sentence (since this requires impartiality and wisdom). Later in the scene [80] Portia praises Arragon for having the wisdom to lose. If Portia is being asked by Arragon to be the judge (and overrule the verdict), she is politely excusing herself. [See Additional Notes, 2.9.60]

40. / Need I be judge of that? / 'Tis not my place to judge || And what is here?

/ I need not be the judge of that. || What's here?

41. {The fire seven times tried this}

**tried:** refined, purified [See Morocco's use of the term, 2.7.53]

42. Q1 reads as follows:

*The fire seven times tried this | Seven times that judgement is,  
That did never choose amiss, | Some there be that shadow's kiss,  
Such have but a shadow's bliss: | There be fools alive I wis  
Silvered o'er, and so was this. | Take what wife you will to bed,  
I will ever be your head: | So be gone, you are sped.*

*Five times judgement brings a hiss,* °  
*Now your choice begets a miss;* °43  
*Some there be that shadow's kiss,*  
*Such have °but a shadow's bliss.*  
*There be fools we all dismiss,* 44  
*Silvered °o'er, and so was this.* °45  
*Take what thought °you will to bed* 46  
*I will ever be your head* °47  
*So be gone for you are sped.*

*/ brings abyss / falls amiss,*  
*/ Now your choice is e'er amiss*  
  
*/ Claiming / Getting*  
  
*/ Varnished // e'er amiss*  
*{wife}*  
*/ e'er be in your head*  
*> dismissed*

Still more fool I shall appear,  
 By° the time I linger here,  
 With one fool's head I came to woo,  
 But I go away with two.  
 Sweet adieu, I've lost my claim,  
 Thus I go to° bear my shame. 48 49

*/ With*  
  
*/ my suit is lame*  
*/ Now to go and*

*Exit Arragon and his attendants*

—Portia  
 One more° moth into the flame. 50  
 O, these high-minded° fools when they do choose,  
 They have the wisdom by their wits to lose.

*/ Another / Flies the*  
*{deliberate} 51*

43. {That did never choose amiss} / Choose you now another miss / That did never choose iwiss

44. {There be fools alive Iwiss}

**Iwiss:** certainly, assuredly, for sure; 'I know,' 'I think.' The capitalization suggests that the original intent was probably *I wis*, or *I know*.

45. {Silvered o'er, and so was this}

**silvered o'er:** a) Dressed up with the appearance of merit, perhaps donning some silver medals. This reference specifically implicates Arragon for the very thing he so diligently condemned in others—undeserved worth. b) The silver or gray hair found on aged persons who are considered wise (due to age) but who are, indeed, fools.

46. {Take what wife you will to bed}

This line speaks of taking a wife to bed yet the vow forbids a suitor from ever taking a wife should he choose the wrong casket. The term "wife" might refer to a would-be wife, or someone Arragon wished would be his wife; but instead of having a real wife all he will ever have is ...

47. {I will ever be your head}

This suggests that the head of a blinking idiot will ever be Arragon's head, i.e., Arragon, from hereon in shall be seen as a blinking idiot. Alternatively, the line could read: 'I will e'er be in your head,' thus suggesting that thoughts about losing the lottery (and henceforth being wifeless) will ever be in Arragon's mind.

48. / Sweet adieu—I'll keep my vow, | Bearing sorrow, then as now. || To your good choice, O prince, I bow

/ And to my fortune I do bow. / A moth into the flames—and how!

/ Sweet adieu, my oath I'll keep | With but patience as I weep || Ay, one more night of restful sleep.

/ Sweet adieu, my life I'll wait | Patiently to bear my fate || Thankfully not a moment late.

49. {Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath, | Patiently to bear my wroath.} *Por:* {Thus hath the candle singed the moath}

**wroath:** wroth > a variant of *ruth* (sorrow, grief). Due to the spelling, it is likely that *oath* and *wroath* were meant to form a triplicate rhyme with *moath*. In modern pronunciation, the rhyme between *oath* and *wroth* is lost, whereas the rhyme between *wroth* and *moth* is preserved. Thus, in modern pronunciation Arragon's speech is completed in rhyme by Portia's following line (*wroth-moth*).

50. {Thus hath the candle singed the moth}

51. **deliberate:** deliberating, calculating, over-thinking. This term suggests a reliance on the mind as opposed to the heart. Portia, however, is thankful for this deliberation since it leads such suitors into making the wrong choice.

The ancient saying is still true of late:  
Hanging and wiving are compelled by fate.<sup>o 52</sup>

/ to date / and straight  
/ obliged by / outcomes of / fortunes of

—Portia  
Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

*Enter a Messenger*

[—Messenger  
Where is my lady?

—Portia

Here. What would my lord? ]<sup>53</sup>

—Messenger  
Madam, there is alighted at your gate  
A young Venetian, one who has arrived<sup>o</sup>  
To indicate<sup>o</sup> the approach<sup>o54</sup> of his lord,  
From whom he bringeth bounteous<sup>o</sup> off<sup>o</sup> rings,<sup>55</sup>  
That is to say<sup>o</sup> (besides his courteous words)<sup>56</sup>

{ comes before } / who comes in advance  
{ To signify } / Thus announce // th' arrival  
/ numerous  
> { To wit }

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52. {The ancient saying is no heresy: | Hanging and wiving goes by destiny}

/ The ancient saying is a verity / is a truth I see

/ The ancient saying is not one of<sup>o</sup> hearsay: | Hanging and wiving go by fate I dear say

/ found on

/ The ancient saying holds true even now: | Hanging and wiving are fated somehow

53. **my lord:** Portia is using this term playfully as it would never be used in reference to a messenger. She is playing on the use of the term *my lady*, suggesting by her playful, *my lord*, that she does not hold the rank of a lady. This line {Where is my lady? || Here my lord}, however, is suspect, both in the messenger's superfluous question, and Portia askew response.. Thus, this line could be deleted without any loss.

54. {th'approaching} / th'arrival / the coming

55. {From whom he bringeth sensible regreets} / From whom he bringeth bounding compliments / From whom he brings abounding (/abundant) salutations.

**sensible:** evident to the senses, abundant

**regreets:** a) salutations, greetings, compliments, b) gifts

*Sensible regreets* would usually be interpreted as 'abundant greetings,' yet with the modifier ('Gifts of great value') the expression would suggest, 'a lot of gifts'—and gifts of great value.

56. {To wit, besides commends and courteous breath}

**to wit:** namely, that is to say

/ That is—besides his words of lavish praise— / That is to say—besides great compliments— / That is to say—besides his courteous words— / To wit (besides abounding compliments) / To wit (besides his courteous words and praise)

Gifts of rich value. 'Til now,° I've not seen<sup>57</sup>  
So hopeful° an ambassador of love.<sup>58</sup>  
A day in spring has never come° so sweet  
To show the bounty of summer's approach<sup>59</sup>  
As this forerunner° comes before his lord.

> As of yet / Up to this time  
{likely} > promising  
{in April never came}  
  
{fore-spurrer}<sup>60</sup>

—Portia

No more, I pray thee. I am half afeared°  
Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee °  
Thou spend'st such lavish wit° in praising him.<sup>61</sup>  
Come, come, Nerissa, this° I long to see,  
One from Cupid's post come so gracefully.°

/ afraid  
/ he is your cousin  
/ your finest wit / such high-blown wit  
/ for  
{mannerly}

—Nerissa [*aside*]

Bassanio! Lord Love—if thy will it be!<sup>62 63</sup>

/ Lord of Love, O let it be!

### *Exeunt*

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57. {Yet, I have not seen} / I have not yet seen / As of yet, I've not seen

**yet:** as of yet, heretofore

58. /So promising a harbinger° of love / courier / messenger

59. {To show how costly summer was at hand} / To show how fully summer was at hand

**costly:** lavish, full, bountiful

60. **fore-spurrer:** a forerunner who comes on a horse.

61. {Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him} / Thou spend'st thy Sunday best in praising him.

**high-day:** holiday, fit for a high holy day or a Sunday; high-blown, lavish, extravagant

**high-day wit:** language befitting a special day,

62. The line found in Q1 reads: 'Bassanio Lord, love if thy will it be.' Most editors reject this punctuation and follow the sensible emendation of Rowe, which reads: 'Bassanio, Lord Love, if thy will it be! The punctuation in Q1 refers the term 'Lord' to Bassanio (Lord Bassanio), rather than it being a reference to Cupid (Lord love), who is mentioned in the previous line. Another possibility is that Nerissa is making a plea to God, the Lord, in hopes of Bassanio's arrival: 'Bassanio, Lord—love if they will it be.'

/ Bassanio! [please] Lord—[let there be] love if thy will it be! / if it's meant to be!

/ [Please let it be] Bassanio, Lord, [and let there be] love, if they will it be!

/ O Lord, Bassanio—if thy will it be!

/ Bassanio, Lord of Love, I pray it be [See Additional Notes, 2.9.100]

63. The question begged by this line is: How might Nerissa come to know, or even surmise, that Bassanio was a suitor, and likely to arrive in Belmont? Her delighted mention of Bassanio, and her plea to Cupid for it to be Bassanio, tells us that she was eagerly expecting his arrival. (Bassanio's arrival also portends the arrival of Gratiano, which may be what Nerissa was really hoping for). [See Essays: *The Lottery*]

*Venice. Enter Salanio and Salarino*

—Salanio

Now, what news on the Rialto?

—Salarino

Why yet it lives there unchecked,<sup>1</sup> that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading<sup>2</sup> wrecked<sup>3</sup> on the narrow seas—the Goodwin Shoals<sup>4</sup> I think they call the place—a very dangerous flat,<sup>5</sup> and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall<sup>6</sup> ship lie buried. This be the news<sup>4</sup> if my gossip report be a woman of her word.<sup>5</sup>

—Salanio

I wish she were as lying a gossip as an old maid who ever knapped<sup>7</sup> ginger,<sup>8</sup> (moving her jaw up and down without a word coming out) or like a one who weeps and has her neighbors believing that her husband has just died—for the third time! But it is true, without any miss-matching of words,<sup>6</sup> or crossing the plain highway of talk,<sup>7</sup> that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio—O that I had a title good<sup>9</sup> enough to keep his name company—<sup>8</sup>

—Salarino

Come the full stop anon<sup>9</sup>—what sayest thou?<sup>9</sup>

/ by now > already

—Salanio

Why the end is, he hath lost a ship.<sup>10</sup>

1. {it lives there unchecked} / Why news is spreading fast

**lives:** / breeds **unchecked:** unstopped, uncontradicted

2. {that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading} / that Antonio's ship, laden with riches

**rich lading:** rich cargo

3. **wrecked:** {wrackt}: wracked / strewn about **the Goodwin Shoals:** {the Goodwins}: the Goodwin Sands, a shoal off the coast of Kent, England **flat:** sand bar, sand flat, shoal **tall:** / proud / great / grand

4. **be the news:** {as they say}

5. {if my gossip report be an honest woman of her word} / If the rumors are true

This double-positive (honest + woman of her word) could be simplified or emended as follows: 'if my gossip report be an honest woman / if my gossip report be a woman of word.

6. {without any slips of prolixity}

**prolixity:** wordy, verbose, long-winded—tiresome as a result of being too wordy

**slips:** lapses into, indulgence in

slips of prolixity: without embellishment, without using too many words (or euphemisms to try and cover up the hoped for truth), etc.

7. **crossing the plain highway of talk:** deviating from a straight-forward account; 'beating around the bush.'

8. **knapped:** chewed on **ginger:** / ginger snaps **title good enough:** / merit enough

9. / Come to the end already! What is it? / Come, the full stop. And now, what sayest thou? / Come, the full stop by now—what sayest thou?

10. The line division in Q1 is amiss. It reads:

*Salarino.* Come, the full stop.

*Solanio.* Ha, what sayest thou, why the end is, he hath lost a ship.

In this line division, Salanio asks Salarino a question when Salarino is the one seeking information. Hence, Salanio's question, 'Ha, what say'st thou?' should be assigned to Salarino. In addition, it is clear what Salarino is saying and so for Salanio to question him is not warranted. In defense of the original line structure, Salanio could be asking the question to himself, and then answering it but such a construction is forced.

—Salarino

I hope<sup>o</sup> it might prove the end of his losses.<sup>11</sup>

{would}

—Salanio

Let me say, ‘amen’ to that,<sup>12</sup> [lest the devil cross my prayer—for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.]

*Enter Shylock*

How now, Shylock—what news among the merchants?

—Shylock

You knew—none so well, none so well as you—of my daughter’s flight.<sup>13</sup>

—Salarino

That’s certain. I, for my part, knew the tailor<sup>14</sup> that made the wings on which she flew away.<sup>15</sup>

—Salanio

And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was ready to fly<sup>16</sup>—as it is the nature of all ⟨young girls⟩ to leave the nest.<sup>17 18</sup>

**nature:** {complexion} / disposition

—Shylock

She is damned for it!<sup>19</sup>

—Salarino

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11. See note 27 for a possible way to rectify this scene. If rectified, Salarino and Salanio would exeunt here, lines 19-50 would be deleted, and Shylock would enter alone and deliver his famous speech, ‘Hath not a Jew eyes?’ to the audience—and not to the disinterested Salarino and Salanio. Shylock, moreover, would be trying to convince himself that his need for revenge against Antonio was justified.

12. {Let me say ‘amen’ betimes} / Let me say ‘amen’ while there is still time / before it’s too late

**betimes:** while there is still time; right now / quickly

13. It seems that Jessica’s flight took place a few weeks ago; this is consistent with Tubal’s return from Genoa, which takes place later in the scene. (Genoa, by road, is some 200+ miles from Venice.) Shylock has seen Antonio many times, and it is likely he would have also seen Salarino and Salanio. Yet, for dramatic consistency, we must assume that this is the first time that Shylock sees Salanio and Salarino since Jessica’s flight.

14. A fanciful reference to a tailor who made Jessica’s wings; this could also be a reference to the tailor who made the boy’s clothing that Jessica wore.

15. {she flew withal}

16. {fledge} a fledgling, ready to fly.

17. {leave the dam}: leave the nest. The substitution of *nest* for *dam*, which makes the line more understandable, ruins the word association with the next line where Shylock says, ‘she is damned for it.’

18. In an earlier embodiment of the play, where Salarino alone existed (and had not yet been split into two identical characters: Salarino and Salanio) all the lines in this scene belonged to Salarino. When Salanio was added, this line (which has congruity as a single line) was split into two, with the first part remaining with Salarino and the second part assigned to Salanio. Salanio’s superfluous closing line, [73], however, was not part of the original embodiment (nor originally assigned to Salarino) but was likely added *ex post facto* after the final draft was complete. [See Note 41]

19. Here the blame quickly shifts from Salarino and Salanio to Jessica (where it belongs) and then the blame changes into rage against Christians in general and Antonio in particular. Shylock’s words hereafter, to the two Sallies—although he is being mocked—is friendly and cordial. He does not attack them in the way they attack him.

That's certain, if the devil may be her judge.

—Shylock

My own flesh and blood to rebel!

—Salanio

This bag of flesh is sure to rebel for a man of your years.<sup>20 21</sup>

—Shylock

I say my daughter is my flesh and my blood.

—Salarino

There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet black and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and white Rhenish.<sup>22 23</sup> But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio has had any loss at sea or no?

—Shylock

There I have another bad match.<sup>24</sup> A bankrupt,<sup>25</sup> a prodigal<sup>26</sup> who dare scarce show his head on

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20. {Out upon it, old carrion, rebels it at these years.}

**out upon it:** Probably refers to something like, 'damn it,' 'to hell with it,' 'throw it out,' etc. thus suggesting something that is ruined or ready to be discarded. This negative sense is supported by the reference to the body as 'old carrion.' A similar term ('out upon her') is used by Shylock later in the scene [113] when referring to his daughter.

**old carrion:** the body which is corporeal, weak, and subject to aging

**rebels it at these years:** the body, specifically the male sexual organ, rebels (does not follow one's wishes) when it gets to be this age. / Damn this old carrion. It rebels and will not rise to the occasion

21. A line, expounding upon the sexual nature of Salanio's previous comment, could be added here:

—Salarino: You can't expect it to rise on every occasion.

22. Salarino talks here in a very familiar tone and he seems to know both Jessica and Shylock well enough to make such a comparison. Yet his words are rather acerbic. Shylock, however, does not respond to these cutting words (nor does he seem to take offence) as his mind is occupied with other concerns. Shylock opens the scene with an accusatory tone (against the Sals) but the bulk of his mentality quickly shifts to his daughter and Antonio (with help from the Sals).

23. The contrast between red wine and Rhenish (which is a white German wine) is primarily that between something crude (red wine) and something refined (Rhenish) though there is also the more obvious contrast between the colors of red and white. Without an understanding of Rhenish this contrast would be lost, especially since *Rhenish* sounds a lot like *red*. To make this distinction clear, the above line could read: 'between red wine and white,' or 'between crude red wine and fine white Rhenish.'

24. {There I have another bad match} / There I have another thing gone wrong.

This reference is unclear and we are not certain of how Antonio's loss at sea represents another bad match. The first bad match—which Shylock is unwittingly concurring with—is that between Shylock and his daughter, the second bad match is that between Shylock and Antonio. The bad match refers to Antonio's inability to pay—but we are not clear as to why Shylock is calling it bad. (If Shylock was truly delighted in Antonio's loss, he might call it a good match rather than a bad one).

25. {a bankrout}: someone whose funds (bank account) has been routed; someone who is bankrupt

26. {a prodigal} / a wasted man.

The term generally refers to one who has carelessly spent or wasted his wealth (by being too liberal in his spending). Antonio, however, is more careful in his ventures yet, earlier in the scene, Shylock describes Antonio's ventures as, 'ventures he hath squandered abroad' [1.3.20-21] and so the term might refer to Antonio's overly extended ventures.

the Rialto; a beggar that was used to come so smug upon the mart.<sup>27</sup> Let him look to his bond. He was wont to call me 'usurer'—let him look to his bond. He was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy—let him look to his bond.

—Salarino

Why, I am sure, if he forfeit thou wilt not take his flesh. What's that good for?

—Shylock<sup>28</sup>

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27. **upon the mart:** at the Rialto; where the merchants and traders meet

28. According to theory, Salarino and Salanio were not found in the original draft of the play (nor the second draft—for in that draft Salarino alone existed) but the pair came about as part of a third draft—and the pair's main function is to talk about, and give news of, the main characters. Thus, it is likely that Shylock's famous speech was originally a monologue, with Shylock making his plea to the audience rather than two supporters of Antonio (who would not sympathize with, nor understand, Shylock's position).

To bait fish withal.<sup>29</sup> If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced<sup>30</sup> me, and hindered me half a million times.<sup>31</sup> He hath laughed at my losses, mocked my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my ventures, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies—and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, arms, legs,<sup>32</sup> senses, affections, desires?<sup>33</sup> (Are we not) fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what kindness does he return?<sup>34</sup> Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be, by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy<sup>35</sup> you teach me I will return unto you;<sup>36</sup> yet it shall go harder to you than it has come to me.<sup>37 38</sup>

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29. / To use for baiting fish. / To use as bait for fish

30. / dishonored / humiliated

31. {hindered me half a million}: a) hindered me again and again, a half a million times, b) caused me a loss of half a million ducats in profit

/ hindered me a million times

32. {dimensions} / a body frame / bones > which make up a person's height

33. {affections, passions}

*Affections* generally refers to objective desires, things a person likes, things influenced by the senses; *passions* refer more to subjective feelings, stirred from the heart.

34. {what is his humility?}

/ what kindness does he show? > said with sarcasm

/ what does he give (/offer / show) in return?

**his humility:** his humble response; the kindness and benevolence shown by a Christian

35. **villainy:** / ill-treatment / vulgarity / obscenity.

The term *Jew* was often synonymous with *villain*, and we see this reference in a line by Launcelet: *for I am a Jew [villain] if I serve the Jew any longer.* [2.2.108] The villainy that Christians teach Jews, is that they view and treat Jews as villains; hence, that same villainy (and wretched treatment) that Christians impose on Jews, Shylock, a Jew, will now impose on a Christian.

36. {execute} / repay unto you/ give in fair return / repay in fullness / give back to

37. {and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction}

/ and it shall go hard, for I will give it to you better than you have given it to me

/ and I will give it hard to you but I will give the better lesson

38. There is a continued reference to Christians even though the object of Shylock's revenge is Antonio. Antonio is the one who has mistreated Shylock, and he (Antonio) has become a symbol for Shylock which represents the Christian mistreatment of Jews. [See Additional Notes, 3.1.69]

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[optional lines]

<< —Salanio

Your words are filled with passion, old man, yet fail to impress. If Christian and Jew be alike in their need for revenge why not in their readiness to forgive? I say, there is neither Jew nor Christian in your words; there is naught but hatred—a misplaced and misbegotten hatred.

—Salarino

Antonio is the best of men.

—Salanio

This revenge you ply with such zeal is not a thing you've learned by Christian example—'tis your own creation. It has nothing to do with good Antonio who hates usury not the Jew or his nation.<sup>42</sup> >>

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42. Optional line: "Bear in mind, we speak of good Antonio not about the lesser company he keeps." Adding this line would indicate that Antonio is especially good (and never makes a negative comment about Jews) while other Christians, such as Salanio and Salarino, are not so good, and may have made negative comments about Jews.

*Enter a Man from Antonio*

—Man

Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house and desires to speak with you both.

—Salarino

We have been up and down to seek him out.<sup>43 44</sup>

*Exeunt Salarino, Salanio, and Man*

*Enter Tubal*

—Shylock

How now, Tubal. What news from Genoa?<sup>45</sup> Hast thou found my daughter?

—Tubal

I often came where I did hear of her, but could not<sup>o</sup> find her.            {cannot} / but there I could not

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43. Q1 reads: {*Solanio*. Here comes another of the Tribe, a third cannot be matched unless the devil himself turn Jew.} As mentioned in previous notes, anti-Semitic ‘additions’ to the text are often found at the end of a scene or a speech (made as a last remark before a character exits); these add-ons often appear misplaced ‘forced’ upon the text, and smack of having been penned in *ex post facto* by someone other than the author. Also note that in this short interaction, a Jew is likened to a *devil* three times [19, 31, 73]: thus it seems that someone, lacking in all manner of the art, repeated this same reference here, yet again.) And here, again, we find a likely case of ‘unauthorized appendaging.’ Not only is the content suspect, but the textual anomalies surrounding this entry support the theory that it is a corrupt addition to the text: for instance, there a mistaken speech heading in the preceding line (attributing the line to *Saleri* not *Salari*); the stage direction, *Enter Tubal*, is listed twice; and the stage direction reads *Exeunt Gentlemen*, as opposed to *Exeunt*.

*Saleri*. We have been up and down to seek him.

*Enter Tubal*.

*Solanio*. Here comes another of the Tribe, a third cannot be match, unless the devil himself turn Jew. *Exeunt Gentlemen*.

*Enter Tubal*.

[See Additional Notes, 3.1.73]

44. See previous note: The original entry is likely a corrupted addition to the text and has been deleted. However, a portion of the original line attributed to Salanio could be emended (and added to the text):

*Salanio*: Here comes another of the tribe. Let's quick unto Antonio's house.

45. Genoa is 200+ miles from Venice.

—Shylock

Why there, there, there, there!<sup>47</sup> A diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort. The curse never fell upon our nation till now—I never felt it till now.<sup>48</sup> Two thousand ducats in that and other precious, precious jewels. I wish<sup>o</sup> my daughter were dead at my feet<sup>o</sup> and the jewels in her ear! That<sup>o</sup> she were hearsed at my foot<sup>o</sup> and the ducats in her coffin!<sup>49 50</sup> No news of them? Why so? And I know not what is spent in the search. Why, thou—loss upon loss. The thief is gone with so much and so much ⟨spent<sup>o</sup>⟩ to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge;<sup>51</sup> nor no ill-luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders, no sighs but of my<sup>o</sup> breathing, no tears but of my<sup>o</sup> shedding.<sup>52 53</sup>

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47. Stage direction: [*Shylock motions his hands in different directions, as if casually throwing things away, indicating a carefree waste of his jewels and ducats*]

48. No curse has fallen upon ‘our nation,’—the only curse that has fallen is upon Shylock. What pain is Shylock feeling for the first time? All the years of being persecuted as a Jew, by his enemies, he could not feel but the betrayal of his daughter has reached his core; it is like a stabbing that comes from inside his heart. Perhaps it was the combination—the betrayal of his daughter and the reckless ruin of his hard-earned money—that caused Shylock, for the first time, to feel the curse that fell upon his nation. [See Additional Notes, 3.1.81]

49. {I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot and the ducats in her coffin!}

Is Shylock wishing his daughter dead because she has betrayed him or because of the monetary loss she incurred? Here we see Shylock’s confusion over value—between his daughter and his ducats. In the court scene Shylock refuses an offer of 9000 ducats (which was well above the sum stolen by his daughter) so the loss of money is not the whole of his suffering. Here Shylock is wishing his daughter dead so that he could retrieve his jewels and ducats from her dead body—which reveals his confusion and misplaced sense of rage. He simply has no way to understand or express what he is feeling. He is not really wishing his daughter dead, even though he makes this plea twice. Yet even with this wish there is a mixed message: he wishes that his daughter be dead, but also that she be at his feet, that she returns to him.

50. Some additional lines could be added to mollify Shylock’s previous words. (Notice that Shylock speaks frankly about wanting his daughter dead but we never hear him talk with the same directness or sense of entitlement when it comes to Antonio). The added lines would also better situate the question, ‘No news of them?’ addressing it to Tubal as opposed to Shylock asking the question to himself:

—Shylock . . . ducats in her coffin. ⟨She’s made me suffer; she has cut me deeper than all mine enemies. They, I know, are set against me, and their cruelty I can bear, but she was dearer to me than all the world.⟩

⟨—Tubal Those who are closest, oft’ cut us the deepest.⟩

—Shylock No news of them?

⟨—Tubal None.⟩

51. Herein Shylock is using the term *thief*—and expressing his desire for *revenge*—in reference to his own daughter. So, we see that Shylock’s response in terms of revenge—even with respect to his own daughter—is a flaw of his own character and not something he learned from Christian example (as he stated in his famous ‘Hath not a Jew eyes?’ speech). He wants Jessica dead—as that is the action he deems to match her crime. However, Shylock’s words belie his true feelings—he does not actually want Jessica dead but that is the most violent thing he can say as to express his sadness and misplaced rage. Perhaps the kind of revenge that Shylock actually seeks is to teach her a lesson, to somehow make Jessica feel the same kind of pain that he feels so that she might come to know (and regret) the pain she has brought on him.

52. {nor no ill luck stirring but what lights a my shoulders, no sighs but a my breathing, no tears but a my shedding.}

53. **wish:** {would} **feet:** {foot} **That:**{Would} / I wish **at my foot:** / right here **spent:** / lost / wasted / expended **my:** / mine own **ill luck:** / misfortune

—Tubal

Yes, other men have ill luck too. Antonio, as I heard in Genoa—

—Shylock

What? What? Tell me—what kind of ill luck? <sup>54</sup>

—Tubal

He hath an argosy, cast away, coming from Tripolis.

—Shylock

I have heard the same.<sup>o</sup> Is it true, is it true?

{I thank God, I thank God.}

—Tubal

I spoke with some of the sailors who escaped the wreck.

—Shylock

I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news. What else did you hear in Genoa? <sup>56</sup>

—Tubal

Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, one night, eighty ducats. <sup>57</sup>

—Shylock

Thou stick'st a dagger in me. I shall never see my gold again. Eighty ducats in one sitting! Eighty ducats!

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54. {What, what, what, ill luck, ill luck.} / What? What? Ill luck for Antonio?

This odd repetition of words, which is also found in line 96 [I thank God, I thank God. Is it true, is it true?] and line 99 [I thank thee good Tubal. Good news, good news. Ha, ha!] may have resulted from a portion of the original line being unreadable and the typesetter, in an attempt to fix it, simply repeated some of the words that were readable. The original manuscript may have appeared as such:

□□□□□what □□□□□□ ill luck.

a) typesetter's rectification: 'What, what, what, ill luck, ill luck.'

b) another possible rectification: 'Tell me, what kind of ill luck?' / What, what kind of ill luck?

56. Both the quartos and the folios have 'hear in Genoa' {*heere in Genowa*} which most editors emend as 'heard in Genoa?' They defend this emendation by stating that *d* and *e* were easily confused in Elizabethan handwriting, though they have no answer as to how *ea*, in *heard*, would have been mis-typeset as *ee*, in *heere*.

57. {four score ducats} / eighty / one hundred / two hundred / four hundred

The original reads, 'four score ducats'; it is here replaced with a more familiar and recognizable amount of 'eighty ducats.' The term *four score* is not a number readily recognized by the modern audience (and they would have to pause to mentally translate this term into 'eighty.'). In addition, the term is indelibly associated with the opening of the Gettysburg Address and would prompt most audience members to make that irrelevant association.

Eighty ducats does not represent an amount whereby Shylock would feel as if someone had 'stick'st a dagger' in him. Perhaps the intent of Shylock lamenting over 'four score' ducats—and repeating the term twice in the following line—was meant to show his miserliness (for in the context of a 2000 ducat ring, and the 3000 ducat bond, such an amount is too small to take up so much attention). One possible emendation would be to 'up the ante' and replace 'four score ducats' with 'four hundred ducats' which is an amount more likely to elicit such a strong reaction but still insignificant.

—Tubal

And, in my company<sup>58</sup> to Venice, there came several<sup>59</sup> of Antonio's creditors who swear he cannot chose but break.

**break:** / go bankrupt / go bust

—Shylock

I am very glad of it. I'll plague him, I'll torture him. I am glad of it.<sup>60</sup>

—Tubal

One of them showed me a ring that he had from your daughter—in exchange for a monkey.

—Shylock

Damn her for it.<sup>61</sup> Thou torturest me, Tubal. It was my turquoise. I had it of Leah<sup>62</sup> when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a jungle full<sup>o</sup> of monkeys.<sup>63</sup>

**whole jungle:** {wilderness} / whole jungle

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58. **in my company:** / traveling with me / along with me

59. **several of:** {divers of} (> from 'diverse') / a number of / many of

60. At this point Shylock could direct the conversation back to talk of his daughter as opposed to having Tubal always directing the subject of conversation toward Antonio. Hence, Shylock could finish this line by adding, 'And what of my daughter?' or 'And is there any more news of my daughter?'

61. **Damn her for it:** {Out upon her}: Out of this world with her, to hell with her.

62. {I had it of Leah} / I received it from Leah.

Shylock's wife, Leah, is here mentioned by name. Recall the story from Genesis that Shylock told to Antonio, relating to Jacob attending to Laban's sheep. [1.3.74-87]: Jacob's somewhat deceitful actions could have been his way to get even with Laban, his father-in-law, who had previously tricked Jacob into taking Leah (Laban's daughter) as his wife and not Rachel (whom Jacob desired).

63. Shylock's initial response to Tubal begins with an attack on Jessica {out upon her}; then addresses Shylock's feelings {thou torturest me}; and then it's about the ring. The order of the lines could be transposed where Shylock's initial response is about the ring, then Jessica, then himself: *Shylock:* That was my turquoise ring. I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a whole jungle of monkeys. Damn her for it. Thou torture me Tubal.

—Tubal

But Antonio is certainly undone.<sup>64</sup>

—Shylock

Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go Tubal, get me<sup>o</sup> an officer, and give him a two-week notice.<sup>65</sup> I will have the heart of him if he forfeit—for were he out of Venice I can do what business I will.<sup>66</sup> Go, Tubal, and meet me at the Rialto. Go, good Tubal; at the Rialto Tubal.<sup>67 68 69</sup>

**get me:** {fee me} / find me / hire me

*Exeunt. They go separate ways*

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64. Tubal, again, is trying to divert Shylock from his grief (over the loss of his daughter) to something Shylock will be glad of—Antonio's losses.

65. {Bespeak him a fortnight before}. Tell the officer to arrest Antonio in a fortnight (when the bond is due) if Antonio does not pay the full amount.

This securing of an officer in two weeks (when the bond is due) defies the time frame of the play: Bassanio is now in Belmont with plenty of time to win Portia, return to Venice, and pay off the debt—as planned—before it is due. Though Antonio bids Bassanio not to rush things in his courtship of Portia, surely Bassanio would have been well aware of the exact date that Shylock's bond was due (because he was there when the bond was secured and was well aware of the gruesome terms), and would have made sure to pay it off in time—or maybe not. (Bassanio set sail for Belmont at the end of 2.6). [See: *Essays, Time Warp*]

66. [See Additional Notes: 3.1.121]

67. {Go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue. Go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal.} The likely intention here is to show the Elizabethan audience that Jews use their synagogue as a place to do business—which is the very thing that Jesus revolted against. Here “synagogue” is changed to the Rialto since that is the place where Shylock does business. [See Additional Notes, 3.1.123]

68. This line marks the end of a series of odd lines, spoken by Shylock, where he needlessly repeats his words. Such lines include:

What, what, what? Ill luck? Ill luck? [94]

I thank God, I thank God. Is it true? Is it true? [96]

I thank thee good Tubal. Good news, good news! Ha, ha, here in Genoa. [99]

Four score ducats at a sitting! Four score ducats! [104]

I am glad of it. I'll plague him, I'll torture him. I am glad of it. [109]

Go Tubal and meet me at our synagogue. Go, good Tubal, at our synagogue, Tubal. [121]

69. For more on Shylock's emotional state (how his sadness has been displaced by rage) see Additional Notes, 3.1.124

*Belmont.*

*Enter Bassanio, Portia, Gratiano, Nerissa, and attendants.* <sup>1</sup>

—Portia [*to Bassanio*]

I pray you, tarry. <sup>o</sup> Pause a day or two	> spend some more time
Before you hazard, <sup>2</sup> for in choosing wrong	
I lose your company. Thus, forbear <sup>o</sup> awhile.	/ hold back / remain
There's <sup>o</sup> something tells me, but it is not love,	/ Now // cannot
I could <sup>o</sup> not bear to lose you. And you know	{ would }
Indifference <sup>o</sup> counsels not in such a way. <sup>o</sup>	/ Disfavor {Hate} / // {quality}
But lest you should not understand me well <sup>o</sup> —	/ fully
And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought— <sup>5</sup>	
I would detain <sup>o</sup> you here some month or two	/ I want to keep
Before you venture for me. I could teach you	
How to choose right, but then I break my oath, <sup>o</sup>	{ I am forsworn } <sup>6</sup>
And that will <sup>o</sup> never be—so <sup>o</sup> you may miss me.	{ That will I } / thus
But if you do, <sup>o</sup> you'll make me wish a sin,	> miss me / choose wrong
That I did break my oath. <sup>o</sup> So blame your eyes, <sup>8</sup>	{ That I had been foresworn }
They have bewitched <sup>o</sup> me and divided me: <sup>9</sup>	{ They have o'erlooked me and divided me }

1. This scene opens *in media res*. The theory put forth in 1.1 is that Bassanio would receive some kind of help from Nerissa (in choosing the right casket) if he won Portia's heart, i.e., if she chose him. Here we see that Portia has already chosen Bassanio, that she clearly wants him to choose the right casket. Thus, Bassanio would have had to have been in Belmont for a little while, time enough to win Portia's heart. By all indications it appears that Bassanio was only in Belmont for a few hours before making his choice, though it is possible he could have been there a day or two.

2. **Before you hazard:** Before you make your choice, before you hazard a guess; before you put yourself in harm's way by making a choice.

5. This may indicate that Portia can only think about what she wants (i.e., being with Bassanio) but cannot say anything that would bring this about, that would direct him to choosing the right casket.

6. **I am forsworn:** I have sworn falsely, I have failed to keep my oath. *Forsworn* is repeated later in the passage but at no other place in the text. It is interesting to note that a few lines later [53-62] Portia references a story about Hercules from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* wherein, in the English translation (by Golding) the same word *forsworne* appears—and this is the only place in the 15 books of the *Metamorphoses* that the word is used. The likely implication is that the author referenced a copy of Golding's *Metamorphoses* while composing this portion of the text (as opposed to simply recalling the story from a past reading).

8. { Beshrew your eyes }

9. { They have o'erlooked me and divided me }

**o'erlooked:** a) bewitched, as in being amazed and charmed, b) bewitched, as in altering one's vision, as in confusion or with eyes looking but not seeing, c) overlooked me, not seen me as I am

**divided me:** This may refer to the effect that Bassanio's eyes have on Portia (dividing her sentiments, with one part loyal to her obligation, and keeping her vow to her father, with the other part loyal to her heart, wanting to break her vow and help Bassanio). Or it could refer to what Bassanio *does not* see with his eyes—he sees one Portia but overlooks the deep division and confusion within her.



What treason there<sup>o</sup> is mingled with your love?<sup>19</sup> / What heresy

—Bassanio

None but the ugly treason of mistrust<sup>20</sup> / fortune

Which makes me fear th' enjoying of my love.

There is more kinship and affinity<sup>o</sup> / and likeness of kind

'Tween snow and fire, as<sup>o</sup> treason and my love.<sup>25 26</sup> > as there is between

—Portia

⟨And so<sup>o</sup> you say your love is pure and taintless⟩ / I hear

Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack

Where men enforcèd do speak<sup>o</sup> anything.<sup>27</sup> / will say

—Bassanio

Promise me life and I'll confess the truth.<sup>28</sup>

—Portia

Well then, 'confess and live.'<sup>29</sup>

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19. Portia is using this light banter, and this accusation of treason, to test Bassanio and to have him 'confess' what is true. Her real question is: Is your love true—is what you show (outwardly) a true reflection of what you feel? Are your motivations based on love for me or personal gain? Confess. Tell me the truth.

20. {None but that ugly treason of mistrust | Which makes me fear th' enjoying of my love}

Bassanio should be so sure about his love for Portia, about the fate that will bring them together—and that it's God's plan that they be together—that it is treasonous for him to doubt and mistrust that.

Bassanio's treason could be in his mistrust of the wisdom of the lottery devised by Portia's father, and Portia's loyalty to her father's wishes. Bassanio truly loves Portia, and wants to enjoy the fullness of that love (the same way that Portia wants to enjoy it)—and he mistrusts whether the lottery (which is supposed to determine one who truly loves Portia) will, in fact, be true to his and her love. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.29]

25. Bas: 'Tween snow and fire as there is between treason | And my love.

Portia: Yet, you speak upon the rack

26. {There may as well be amity and life | 'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love}

There is as much kinship and similarity between snow and fire (which are opposites) as there is between treason and my love. In other words, there is no treason mixed with my love—it is pure and taintless. The treason is in my doubt as to whether or not I will enjoy that love but not in my love.

27. / Where men compelled do confess anything

Again Portia is teasingly testing Bassanio, saying that his admission of love may not be sincere since, as he himself admitted, he is like someone upon the rack and, thus, will make a confession (utter a falsehood) just so he can get off the rack. Such a rack-made confession, therefore, cannot be trusted and taken as true.

28. This is a somewhat filler line; it's just an extension of the rack metaphor. No great mystery to figure out here.

29. **confess and live:** an inversion of the proverb, 'Confess and be hanged (die).' "Well then, confess the truth (that you love me) and you shall have life, you shall live.



—Portia

Away then! I am locked in one of them:

If you do love me, you will find me out.<sup>36</sup>

Nerissa and the rest, stand all aback.<sup>o</sup>

Let music sound<sup>o</sup> while he doth make his choice.<sup>39</sup>

Then if he lose he'll make a swan-like end,<sup>40</sup>

Fading in music. That the metaphor<sup>o</sup>

May stand more proper,<sup>o</sup> my eyes shall be the stream<sup>o</sup>

And wat'ry death-bed for him.<sup>43</sup> Should he win<sup>o</sup>—

And what is music then? Then music is

The teeming flourish<sup>o</sup> of joyous<sup>o</sup> cornets

That play to honor a new-crownèd monarch,

Or like the dulcet<sup>o</sup> sounds at break of day

That creep into<sup>o</sup> the dreaming bridegroom's ear

And summon him to marriage. <sup>o</sup> Now he goes,

{aloof} / make room, stand back

/ play

/ die just like a swan

{comparison}

/ true // river

{He may win}

/ fanfare // sparkling

/ ambrosial

/ fall upon

/ And call him sweetly to wed

---

36. **If you do love me:** The lottery was designed to find Portia a man who would truly love her. Portia has (so far) been resisting the 'wisdom' of her father's lottery, uncertain that such a device will find one who truly loves her—and also, uncertain, that it would find one whom she truly loves. But now, not able to intervene or prolong, Portia surrenders to her fate and her father's lottery. Her words, *If you do love me, you will find me out* are more likely a hopeful prayer than a confirmation of the efficacy of her father's lottery.

**find me out:** find the casket that holds my picture

39. This is not necessarily a directive for the musicians to begin playing. They could, however, be playing some kind of musical interlude at this point and go into their song when instructed to do so later in the scene.

40. {Then if he lose he makes a swan-like end}

/ Then if he loses, he'll die like a swan / Then if he lose he'll play a dying swan

**a swan-like end:** swans were associated with music and were believed to sing a song (a swan-song) before they died. This belief was also found in Plato, Euripedes, and Aristotle, and commonly held as true during Shakespeare's time: "It is said of the learned, that the swan, a little before her death, sings most pleasantly, as prophesied by a secret instinct her near destiny." *Shepherd's Calendar* (1597). The use of the term *swan song*, which is based on this supposition, now refers to the last great thing a person does before dying or the final work of a person's life. The term *swan song* comes from the English translation of the German word *schwanengesang*. Here, the image of a swan singing before it dies is replaced by the tragic image of swan sinking to a watery death while sad music plays in the background.

43. / That the comparison may stand more proper,

Mine eyes shall offer a river of tears

To thus provide for his watery death-bed.

With no less grandeur <sup>o</sup> —but with much more love— <sup>46</sup>	{ presence }
Than youthful Hercules when he did rescue <sup>o</sup> <sup>47</sup>	/ who goes to rescue
The virgin princess, <sup>48</sup> paid in sacrifice <sup>o</sup>	/ given as a tribute
By suff'ring <sup>o</sup> Troy <sup>49</sup> to placate Poseidon's	{ howling }
Sea monster. I am now the sacrifice. <sup>50</sup>	{ I stand for sacrifice } <sup>51</sup>
The rest around me are the Trojan wives, <sup>o52 53</sup>	/ wives of Troy
Who now <sup>o</sup> approach <sup>o</sup> with beared visages <sup>54</sup>	/ here // have come
To view the outcome <sup>o</sup> of this grand exploit. <sup>o</sup> <sup>55</sup>	{ issue } / heroic / awesome venture
Go Hercules! <sup>56</sup> If thou live, I will live. <sup>57</sup>	
But here I view with much, much more dismay <sup>o</sup>	/ this fight with more dismay
Then thou, the hero, <sup>o</sup> who doth mak'st the fray. <sup>58</sup>	/ greater

*Nerissa instructs the musicians to play a song.  
A song is played while Bassanio mulls over the caskets* <sup>59 60</sup>

46. / With no less dignity, but much more love

47. {Than young Alcides when he did redeem}

48. Refers to Hercules's rescue of the virgin princess Hesione.

[For the complete story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Additional Notes, 3.2.56]

**with much more love:** Hercules did not rescue Hesione out of love but for payment. Portia is bringing up this story, but then saying that Bassanio (coming with the same grandeur and dignity as Hercules) is coming with much more love, and trying to win her not as a mercenary, for some material gain, but out of love (something which Hercules did not have for the virgin princess he set forth to rescue). Hercules's agreed-upon reward for saving Hesione was not her hand in marriage but her father's magical horses.

49. {The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy}

**howling:** crying out, lamenting, suffering. Only after the virgin princess was offered as a sacrifice to the sea-monster would the ravages and floods afflicting Troy be appeased.

**I stand for:** I am, I represent

50. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.58]

51. **stand for:** represent

52. {The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives} / The rest aback are the women of Troy

53. / To the sea-monster by the lamenting

People of Troy. And now, 'tis I who stand

As sacrifice. And all those around me,

Aghast in wonder,<sup>o</sup> are the Trojan<sup>o</sup> wives / horror / marvel

54. **with beared visages:** / with teary visages / with teary faces all / tears upon their cheeks

55. / Who come with beared eyes and stained cheeks / Who now come forth with tears upon their cheeks

56. {With beared visages come forth to view | The issue of th'exploit. Go Hercules.}

57. {Live thou, I live}

The sense is that if Hercules lives—and does not die in his attempt to rescue Hesione—then she will live (be rescued). Thus, if Bassanio wins (lives), then Portia will be rescued (and live the life she wants.)

58. / Yet I do view this battle more with fright, | Than you who be in it—he who doth fight.

/ Yet now I look with greater fear in me, | Then you who fight the monster o'the sea.

59. The original stage direction, reads: {*A song whilst Bassanio comments on the caskets to himself.*}

60. In this stage direction Nerissa bids the musicians to play. This action is in support of the theory that Nerissa has come to 'assist' Bassanio with the lottery (because Portia fall in love with him). Many commentators hold that Bassanio receives help (on which casket to choose) from the rhyme scheme of the song (where the first three lines of the song rhyme with *lead*) and also by the lyrics of the song (which suggest the lead casket—if one is listening intently for such a clue).

However, without Bassanio being "tipped off" to listen carefully to the song, such a hint would be lost on him.

It is likely that Bassanio was instructed beforehand to listen carefully to the words of the song. To make it clear that Nerissa is giving Bassanio some kind of 'hint'—and not actually telling him which casket to choose—she could be made to whisper a clue to Bassanio, such as: 'With care, my lord, listen to the ending words of each line of the song.' Some productions, supporting the view that Bassanio was 'tipped off' by the words of the song, put special emphasis on, and yell out, all the words in the song that rhyme with *lead*.

[—Singer]

*Tell me where is fancy bred,  
In ° the heart or in the head?  
How begot, how nourishèd?* <sup>61</sup>

{ *Or in* } > *Either in*  
/ *How 'tis born and how 'tis fed?*

[—Chorus]

*Tell me, tell me. °*

{ *Reply, reply* }

[—Singer]

*It is engendered in the eyes, °  
With gazing fed all fancy dies °  
In the cradle, where it lies. °*

/ *Dull and heavy in the eyes*  
/ *With more gazing, come more lies*  
/ *is where it lies / 'tis there it dies.*

*Let us all ring fancy's knell, °* <sup>63</sup>

[*spoken*] *I'll begin it: [sung] Ding, dong, bell. °*

/ *end*  
/ *Nothing left, no more to spend*

[—Chorus]

*Ding, dong, bell,* <sup>64</sup>

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61. { *Tell me where is fancy bred,* } / Tell me where does loving start,  
{ *Or in the heart, or in the head?* } / In the head or in the heart?  
{ *How begot, how nourishèd?* } / Does it bind or rend apart?

The three lines of the original verse all end in words that rhyme with *lead*. This is often cited to support the argument that Bassanio was directed by the rhyme-scheme of this song to choose the lead casket. The words of the following verses may also provide clues in their warning against the fancy of the eyes, i.e., the gold and silver caskets—suggesting the choice of lead. As mentioned in the previous note, Bassanio would likely need a more obvious clue (such as a clear directive as to where to look for a clue) in order to make the connection between the rhyme-scheme and the lead casket. Nerissa telling Bassanio to listen carefully to the song, especially the last word in each line of the song, would be a hint regarding the location of the hint; Bassanio, intent on the casket—without the direction on where to look for a hint—might overlook the song and its lyrics completely. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.65] [See: *Essays, The Lottery*, for evidence suggesting that Bassanio received help with the lottery].

63. { *Let us all ring fancy's knell.* } > Let us all put an end to fancy, ornament, ostentation  
**knell**: a death bell, the solemn bell marking a death

> Let us put an end to fancy, ornament, ostentation. This points to the lead casket

Alt: *Let the sun of fancy set, | I'll begin—and you beget, | And you will, but not quit yet*

Chorus: *What you give is what you get.*

64. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.72, for facsimile of Q1 original]

—Bassanio [*to the gold casket*] <sup>65</sup> <sup>66</sup>  
 So may the outward shows be least themselves.<sup>67</sup>  
 The world is e'er° deceived° by ornament.° <sup>68</sup>  
 In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt  
 But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,  
 Obscures the show° of evil? In religion,  
 What damnèd act° does not become a blessing  
 When some dry scholar° approves it with text,°  
 Hiding° gross error° with fair ornament?  
 There is no vice so simple° but assumes° <sup>69</sup>  
 Some mark of virtue on its outward parts.  
 How many cowards, whose hearts are as false°  
 As stairs° of sand, wear yet upon their chins  
 The beards of Hercules and frowning° Mars,  
 Who, inward searched, have livers white as milk?  
 They but assume the outer shows of valor° <sup>70</sup>

/ Those who show most without are least within.  
 {still} // grand displays  
 / argued with a glib and gracious voice  
 / act  
 {error}  
 {sober brow} // scripture  
 / Gilding {Hiding the grossness}  
 / no vice as it is  
 / have hearts that would crumble  
 {stayers} / Like stairs  
 / fearless  
 / searched within  
 / a valiant outer show

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65. The soliloquy found in the original is somewhat amiss as it does not resemble the speech of a true romantic hero nor does it fulfill the comic heroism suggested by the scene. Like the speeches of Morocco and Arragon, it is filled with discordant images and does not reflect love, pure-heartedness, or innocence. There is not one mention of Portia or her attributes here.

This soliloquy could be replaced with words and images more fitting of a romantic hero; even though Bassanio does not fully embody the virtues of a romantic hero (and often acts quite the opposite) he has the potential to become such a hero (if not permanently, at least for this one moment).

Bassanio's speech, which cascades with images about scandal, cowardice, hypocrisy, criticalness—and vacant of any hint of love—may reflect a subconscious sense of his own duplicity. His speech in front of the caskets is somewhat out of step with the other speeches delivered by Bassanio in the scene—especially the one coming after he opens the casket and sees Portia's picture [115-130]. Thus all his speeches, except for this one, bear the imprint of a romantic hero, or at least one in the making.

[For a version of this speech, consistent with the heart-set of a romantic hero, see Additional Notes, 3.2.73]

66. Orson Wells suggested that Bassanio could have played the parts of both Morocco and Arragon; and after two wrong choices (the gold and silver caskets) he would then become sure of the contents of the lead casket.

67. / Those who are least, display themselves the most / So are the outward shows e'er least themselves / It is the outward shows be least themselves / So they are least who glisten° themselves most;

68. {The world is still deceived with ornament}

**still:** always, ever; has always been

**ornament:** lavish outer display: / appearance / its own beauty / empty dazzle

69. {so simple but assumes} > Too singular and not able to assume (be interpreted as) some mark of virtue

70. {And these assume but valour's excrement} / And these but display the shows of valor / These cowards but assume valour's plumage

**valour's excrement:** excrement refers to an outgrowth of hair (as hair was seen as a waste product, something excreted by the body). This refers to the beards usually associated with men of valour, as mentioned in line 85. It could also refer to the long hair of heroes but this is not supported in the given context.



⟨Here, here chose I. When all is done and said°  
A heart that giveth° all can ne'er be misled.°⟩<sup>78</sup>

/ when everything is said / all is finished  
/ He who giveth // is ne'er misled

—Portia [*aside*]

How all the other passions fleet to air,  
These° doubtful thoughts and rash-embraced despair;  
And shudd'ring fear, and green-eyed jealousy  
O love be sparing°, ease° thy ecstasy.<sup>79 80</sup>  
In measure, rein° thy joy; scant° this excess!<sup>81</sup>  
I feel too much thy blessings°—make it less<sup>82 83 84</sup>  
[For I fear surfeit]<sup>85</sup>

{As} > Such as / My  
/ I fear this fortune is too much for me  
/ moderate {allay}  
{raine} / rain / hold // block / stint  
/ I fear these feelings o'er flow

—Bassanio [*opening the leaden casket*]

What find I here? A portrait of fair Portia.  
What demigod hath fashioned such a picture  
That comes so near to God's own creation,  
That° makes this image ride upon my eyes  
Such that it seems to move and yet move not?<sup>86 88</sup>

/ To make

---

78. Here, here I choose: when all is said and done | A heart that gives all has already won

79. / O heart be mild, allay this love in me.

80. Alt: Replace this line with three lines:

I fear this love's made a fool-sop° of me. / pansy / milksop  
O heart be sparing, temper this delight,  
O ration joy, don't give it such a might.

81. **raine:** rain down, dole out, give out. **in measure:** in limited and controlled amounts, as not to flood or overwhelm. Here there is the play of oppositions, where Portia is calling for rain, which is associated with abundance, but herein asking that it be given in measure. *Rain* will also be heard as *rein*, which would mean control, hold back, rein in.

82. / In measure rein thy joy, scant this delight!

Thy blessings overflow—appease their might. / I feel too much thy blessings—ease their might.

83. / How all my passions fleet upon the air:

First gone is doubt, then rash-embraced despair;  
This fear and monstrous jealousy be gone / jeal'sy have left me. // are done  
O love, be kind—don't turn more pleasure on / be moderate, tame thy ecstasy; // thy pleasure shun  
In measure rein thy joy, tame this excess;  
I feel too much thy blessings—make it less! / I fear thy blessing's too great

84. This verse ensconces Portia in the comical quality of the play; here we see her love is fully expressed and 'over the top'—more a character expression of love than anything we might find in real life. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.113]

85. {For fear I surfeit} The original line is orphaned, does not follow the rhyme-scheme or meter of the lines which precede it, and simply repeats the theme mentioned previously. Thus it weakens and flattens the impact of Portia's rhyming verse. To fully embody this appendage, this truncated line is emended with a full pair of rhyming lines; or, a more economical solution would be to simply delete the partial line.

/ O in the waves of love's ocean I'm lost; | Beyond all hopes, and ignoring all cost.

/ O, in the heat of love's fire I'm swelt'ring | Lost in the blessedness° of mine own melting.

86. {What find I here? | Fair Portia's counterfeit. What demi-god | Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes  
Or whither riding on the balls of mine | Seem they in motion?}

In the original, Bassanio's two iamb line (What find I here?) completes Portia's previous three iamb line (For fear I surfeit.) Due to the anomalous nature of Portia's two iamb line (see previous note) her line has been expanded to fulfill the iambic pentameter, which now leaves Bassanio's two-iamb line truncated. One way to accommodate this would be to add a pause before or after Bassanio's words, "What find I here?"

88. What find I here? . . .

Fair Portia's portrait!° What ⟨artist, possessing° / wielding  
The spectral powers of a ⟩ demigod  
Hath come so near creation? What is this?

And here, her gentle<sup>o</sup> lips lay slightly open  
 Parted with sugar breath. So sweet an air<sup>o</sup>  
 Should sunder such sweet friends.<sup>89</sup> And in her hair  
 The painter plays the spider and hath woven  
 A golden mesh t'entrap the hearts of men  
 Faster than<sup>90</sup> gnats in cobwebs. But her eyes—  
 How could he see to do them? Having made one,  
 Methinks its power should steal both his eyes  
 And leave the work<sup>o</sup> undone.<sup>91</sup> Yet look how far  
 The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow<sup>o</sup>  
 In underprizing it, just as this copy<sup>o</sup>  
 Doth limp behind her true form.<sup>92</sup> Here's the scroll,  
 The continent<sup>93</sup> and summ'ry of my fortune:<sup>94</sup>

/ muted / dreamy  
 { a bar } / breath / wisp

{ itself } // { unfurnished } unfinished  
 / copy  
 { so far this shadow }  
 { the substance }

*You that<sup>o</sup> choose not by the view,  
 Chance as fair and choose as true.  
 Since this fortune falls to you,  
 Be content, and seek no new.*

/ *Thou who*  
 / *Take fair chance and chose now true*

89. { . . . Here are severed lips | Parted with sugar breath. So sweet a bar | Should sunder such sweet friends. }  
 / Here find her lips, parted by sugar breath; | So sweet a breath could sunder such sweet friends.

90. **faster than:** a) more quickly than, b) more securely than (as in 'bind fast')

91. **undone:** { unfurnished } / unfinished a) without finishing the portrait, b) without being able to furnish the second eye

92. { Doth limp behind the substance } The metaphor of 'limping behind the substance' refers to something which falls short of the real thing (substance), and specifically to a lifeless shadow which follows, or 'limps behind,' the form of a real person. *Limp*, moreover, implies a defective or imperfect kind of following which is not found in the term 'walk behind' or 'follow behind.' Bassanio is here invoking the Neo-platonic theme of opposites highlighted by the contrasting concepts of *substance* and *shadow*. Hence, Bassanio is saying that the '*substance* of my praise (i.e., my words) does wrong this *shadow* (this portrait) in underprizing it (failing to capture its beauty)'—just as this *shadow* (picture) falls short of (limps behind) the *substance* (the real Portia); i.e., his words (as eloquent as they are) do no justice (fall short) in describing the beauty of this portrait, just as this portrait (as wondrous as it is) does no justice in capturing Portia's true beauty.

93. **continent:** contents, container. *Continent* can also be an oblique reference to the fullness, totality, or grandeur of my fortune (as in the size of a continent).

94. { Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll, | The continent and summary of my fortune }  
 / Doth limp behind the living form of Portia  
 / Falls hopelessly<sup>o</sup> short of the real Portia. / lifelessly / dreadfully  
 / Here's the scroll, the summ'ry (/summate) of my fortune: [See Additional Notes, 3.2.129]

*If you be well-pleased with this,  
And hold your fortune for ° your bliss,  
Turn ye toward your loving miss  
And claim her with a loving kiss.* <sup>95</sup>

/ with  
{ Turn you where your lady is }

A gentle° scroll! Fair lady, by your leave  
I come by note, to give and to receive.<sup>96</sup>  
Just like a fighter who obtains the prize,  
Who thinks he's done well in the people's eyes,  
Hearing applause and the echoing° shout <sup>99</sup>  
Giddy in spirit, yet gazing° in doubt,  
Whether those clam'ring cheers° be his or no,°  
So, thrice-fair lady stand I even so,°  
As doubtful° whether what I see be true,  
Until confirmed, signed, ratified by you. <sup>100 101</sup>

/ kindly  
{ Like one of two contending in a prize }  
/ seems triumphant in the people's eyes  
{ and universal }  
/ ling'ring  
{ peals of praise } // not  
/ I stand on the spot  
/ Still doubting

—Portia

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,  
Such as I am. Though, for myself alone,°  
I would not be so daring° in my wish  
To wish myself much better, yet for you<sup>102</sup>

/ when it comes to me  
{ ambitious }

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95. It is not clear as to when—if ever—Bassanio claims Portia *with a loving kiss*. Some productions, concurring with Rowe (a foremost commentator of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century), have Bassanio claim Portia (with a loving kiss) at the end of this line (*I come by note, to give and to receive*) after handing her the note. This timing is doubtful since (later in the same passage) Bassanio tells of his confusion, his unsureness, and so he would not be in a position to claim Portia. Others have the loving kiss come after line 148 (*Until confirmed, signed, ratified by you*)—which is still somewhat early. The kiss can also come after Portia's line [167], *Myself and what is mine to you and yours | Is now converted*. It can also occur after Portia gives him the ring, in line 174 (*And be my vantage to exclaim on you*). In the original there is no stage direction for the kiss nor any clear pause or indication as to when such a kiss would be planted. We cannot say for sure that one is even given. We see throughout the play that Bassanio is never able to 'claim' Portia; she is always in charge and never acts as the docile princess eager to be claimed by her gallant prince—save for a few sentimental lines [108-113] which she is eager to dismiss (*Scant this excess—make it less*) or a few stray lines wherein she fully gives herself to Bassanio [149-175] which, however, end with a condition (*Let it presage the ruin of your love | And be my vantage to exclaim on you*).

[See Additional Notes, 3.2.138]

96. To coincide with the words, 'I come by note,' Bassanio could offer Portia the scroll.

100. / Amidst a great applause and thun'drous shout

99. / What confirmation does Bassanio seek?—that he has won the lottery (which is apparent) or that he has won the true fortune of the lottery, i.e., Portia's love. Bassanio is doubtful (unsure) about the truth of what he sees; he sees Portia smiling at him (and seemingly pleased with the outcome) but he wants assurance, he wants her to affirm not only that he has won the lottery (which is apparent) but also that he has indeed won her heart and the fullness of her love (which is not, in his mind, assured by the lottery). [See Additional Notes, 3.2.148]

101. Bassanio talks only of his confusion—when, in fact, there really should be no confusion at all. In the first soliloquy, after opening the casket, he describes the picture of Portia (but not her) with glowing words; after reading the scroll, he talks of his uncertainty; after his uncertainty is pacified, he talks about his joyful bodily confusion—but not once does he actually speak of Portia, nor her beauty, nor his love for her, nor his assumed state of joy. All his talk is indirect, metaphorical, speaking of a picture, of winning a fight, of buzzing cheers—but never once of Portia. Not once, in all his talk, does he even mention her name.

Is this the way a true hero would approach it?—winning without even recognizing it? Being confused and unsure? Or would a hero take hold of this triumphant moment and use it as a glorified opportunity to now give full expression to his (previously bridled) love?

102. / I am content and would not dare to wish | That I, myself, be better, yet for you

I would be tripled <sup>o</sup> twenty times myself; <sup>o</sup> 103	{trebled} / better
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times	
More rich, that I, in beauty, dignity,	
Comfort, <sup>o</sup> and virtue might exceed account. 104 105 106	{livings} / friendship
But the full sum of me is some <sup>o</sup> of something	/ part
⟨That's yet to be complete.⟩ To term more fully: <sup>o</sup> 107 108 109	/ Advised more fully
I'm <sup>o</sup> an unlessoned girl, <sup>o</sup> unschooled, unpracticed <sup>o</sup> ; 110	{Is} / unfinished
Happy in this, she is not yet so old	
But she may learn; and happier than this,	
She is not bred so dull that she can learn; <sup>o</sup>	/ and may learn quickly;
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit	
Commits itself to yours, to be directed	
As from her lord, her governor, her king. <sup>o</sup>	/ master, and her king
Myself and what is mine, to you and yours, <sup>o</sup>	/ I give to you
I now impart. <sup>o</sup> But now I was the lord	{Is now converted} / I hereby transfer
Of this fair mansion, <sup>o</sup> master of my servants,	/ of this estate
Queen o'er myself; and even now, yet now,	
This house, these servants, and my very self, <sup>o</sup>	{and this same myself}
Are yours, my lord. <sup>o</sup> I give them with this ring	{my lord's}

*She holds up ring*

103. {I would be trebled twenty times myself} / I would have myself tripled twenty times

104. / And friendship might stand high in your account.

105. More rich, that only to stand high in your account}

The latter line contains two extra syllables (six iambs instead of five). Some editors 'correct' the verse by shifting the extra iamb from the beginning of the second line to the end of the first line. Thus: 'A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich | That only to stand high in your account.' (Such an emendation is made in the editions by Oxford, Arden, Norton, Longman, Kittredge, etc. but not in Cambridge, Folger, Bevington, etc.) The transfer of this extra iamb improves the meter of the second line at the expense of the first line (which now contains an extra iamb).

Moreover, the meter of the second line is not fully restored as this transfer provides the line with a weak fourth syllable. I suspect the error lies around the term 'that only to,' which is awkward and which does not meaningfully place the line within the context of the sentence. The word 'account' is also suspect as this same word, and its same meaning, appears twice—both here and at the end of the sentence (which ends on line 155).

[See Additional Notes, 3.2.155]

106. An alternative punctuation would yield this rendering:

/ More rich—to stand but high in your account

I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends / I hope that I, in virtue, beauty, friends

Exceed account.

107. { . . . But the full summe of me | Is sume of something: which, to term in gross }

**some (or sum):** Q1 has *sume* which can be read as *sum* or *some*. Both reading, though differing in nuance, are essentially the same, both diminutive and somewhat self-deprecating:

*Sum of something:* implies that the full sum of Portia is only the sum (totality) of something (and not everything); that her full self is incomplete (i.e., that of an unlessoned girl who still has much to learn)

*Some of something:* refers to a "portion of a portion"—again something which suggests a lack that Bassanio, as her new lord, could fill and make whole. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.158]

108. / ⟨That's yet to reach its fullness.⟩ Thus, in sum, / ⟨Has not yet ripened.⟩ Thus, to state it fully / Hence, to put it bluntly / ⟨That's yet to be completed.⟩ Termed more fully

109. {to term in gross} : in sum, to say in full, to tell you the whole story, to tell you (the whole) truth. *Gross* might also refer to blunt honesty, and frankness, and could be akin to such an expression as 'to say in all honesty.'

/ But the full sum of me is but a part | Of something, which, to tell you the whole truth

110. / I'm as a school-girl—untrained, unpracticed

Which, when you part from, lose, or give away,<sup>111</sup>  
 ‘Twill mark the ruin of your love, I say,<sup>112</sup>  
 And give me reason<sup>o</sup> to regret<sup>o</sup> the day.<sup>113 114</sup> {vantage} / e’re to rue

*She places ring on Bassanio’s finger*

—Bassanio

Madam, you have bereft me of all words. <sup>o</sup>	/ but stolen all my words
All that can speak <sup>o</sup> is the blood in my veins; <sup>116</sup>	/ but speaks / speaks now
And there is such confusion in my powers, <sup>o 117</sup>	/ speech / words / breath
Much like <sup>o</sup> the buzzing cheers that issue from	{ As }
The rousèd <sup>o</sup> masses after they have heard	{ pleasèd }
Some fine oration by their sovereign <sup>o</sup> prince, <sup>118 119</sup>	/ honored {beloved}
Where every something <sup>o</sup> , being blent together,	/ sounding
Turns to a wild of nothing save of joy. <sup>o 121 122</sup>	/ nothing but joy
<And now in me, each voice is lost, <sup>o</sup> each cry>	/ one
Expressed yet not expressed. <sup>123</sup> When this ring parts	

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111. {Which when you part from, lose, or give away}  
**when:** implies an inevitability or an outcome which is expected to happen, whereas *if* does not imply such inevitability.  
 112. {Let it presage the ruin of your love}  
 113. {And be my vantage to exclaim on you.} / And give me cause to berate you all day.  
**vantage:** just cause, give me cause, advantage, a good reason.  
**to exclaim:** yell, rail, fume, scream, denounce, etc. (*ex-claim:* give up your claim on me.)  
 114. [See Additional Note, 3.2.174]  
 116. {Only my blood speaks to you in my veins}  
 117. **powers:** a) power of speech; ability to speak or articulate; b) power of intellect and will; ability to match what is in the mind with the words  
 / As great confusion besieges my words / And great confusion sieges all my words / And great confusion hems my power of speech / As great confusion besieges all my words / As all my powers of speech are confused.  
 118. {As after some oration fairly spoke | By a beloved prince there doth appear}  
 / As after hearing some well-spoken words (/fine oration) | By a beloved prince who doth appear  
 / Like buzzing cheers, come from the rousèd masses | When hearing<sup>o</sup> words from their beloved prince  
 / Like ecstatic (/rapturous) applause of the masses  
 / Like buzzing cheers among the multitudes<sup>o</sup> / arising from the masses / that come from pleasèd crowds  
 / ‘Tis like the buzzing cheers of pleasèd masses,  
 119. / The rousèd masses after their beloved | Prince doth appears and give some fine oration.  
 121. {Turns to a wild of nothing save of joy} / Turns to a wilderness of un’fied<sup>o</sup> joy / mingled  
 122. **something:** sound, noise, voice, all the cheers  
**nothing:** silence. Where every voice (something) blends together in a barren land (wild) of silence (nothing).  
**wasteland:** {wild}; wilderness, desert, barren region, empty plain  
 123. {Expressed and not expressed: . . .} This obscure reference generally means that all the cries (of the multitudes) are expressed as one cry: thus every cry is expressed (as one voice) and unexpressed or unheard (as a singular voice).  
 [See Additional Notes, 3.2.183]

My finger, know that life does part my stead<sup>o</sup> 124 125 / instead  
O, then be bold<sup>o</sup> to say, 'Bassanio's dead.' 126 127 / Then be so bold

—Nerissa

My lord and lady, it is now our time;  
We have stood by and seen our wishes prosper  
Now we cry, 'Joy<sup>o</sup>, good joy, my lord and lady!' {To cry 'Good joy'}

—Gratziano

My lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,  
I wish you all the joy that one<sup>o</sup> can wish, {you}/ I  
For I am sure, whate'er you'd wish for me<sup>o</sup> 1  
<Would fall e'er short of what I now possess.> 2 / Is but a thing I already possess.  
And when your honours mean to seal with vows<sup>o</sup> {solemnize} / celebrate  
The pledging<sup>o</sup> of your faith, I do beseech you 3 {bargain}/ contract  
Still<sup>o</sup> at that time,<sup>4</sup> I may be wed as well.<sup>5</sup> / E'en / That / Please

—Bassanio

With all my heart—if thou canst get a wife.

—Gratziano

I thank your lordship, you have got me one.

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124. {But when this ring | Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence }  
/ But when this ring | Parts from this finger, then parts life instead  
/ When this ring parts | My finger, then I find an earthen bed  
My finger, then . . . / be sure my life has fled / ever my life's been shed / my life does part instead / my life has surely fled

125. Previously, when Bassanio is unsure whether he has truly won Portia [141-45], he uses imagery of a crowd cheering for its champion. Here, when it is confirmed that he has doubtless won his prize, he again invokes the imagery of a cheering, buzzing crowd, where all the voices can be heard (rather the joy of the voices) rather than any individual voice. These images are akin and both refer to the impersonal cheering of a crowd—for its champion or its prince—but none evoke the personal images of love.

Why is it, however, that Bassanio cannot speak? Is he overwhelmed with joy? Why is there such confusion in his powers, in his ability to articulate how he feels? All these impersonal images may come to sound like a rouse, where Bassanio is insinuating that he loves Portia, that he is speechless with joy—but where he may be speechless because he cannot truly tell Portia that he loves her. Never once in all these words does he confirm his love for Portia (as he asks her to do); rather he only intimates and suggests his love by way of his dazed state. He talks about the buzzing cheers of the multitudes (where no single voice can be heard) and never do we hear our hero give words to any singular expression of love. (Again, it is cleverly suggested—and one might leave with the impression that he loves Portia—but his words never blossom into a true and unmistakably expression of love. His final words relate to the image of his own death—and something which may take place in the distant future—but never to his living heart, now. Are these the words of someone in love?—or someone not in love and trying to give the impression (without actually lying) that he is in love?)

126. {O then be bold to say, 'Bassanio's dead.' }

127. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.185]

1. {I wish you all the joy that you can wish | For I am sure you can wish none from me.} I wish that you obtain all the joy that you wish for yourselves—and in your wishing, I am sure that you need not include me (and wish something for me) since I have already obtained the fullness of what I (or anyone else) might wish for me.

2. / Falls short of what I already possess / Is but a thing that I already have / I now possess in the fullest of measure. / Is short of what I already possess

3. / When your honored selves are ready to take | The vows that seal your faith, I beseech you

4. {Even at that time} / That at such time / E'en at that time

5. {I may be married too}





To come along with him.<sup>21</sup>

—Salerio I did, my lord,  
And with good reason:<sup>22</sup> Dear Antonio sends<sup>o</sup> / good cause: Signor Antonio sends  
An urgent message.<sup>23</sup>

*He gives Bassanio a letter*

—Bassanio Ere I ope his letter / But before I read it  
I pray you, tell me, how my good friend doth?<sup>o</sup> <sup>24</sup> / how fairs my good freind?

—Salerio  
Not sick, my lord, but ill in mind and spirit.<sup>25 26</sup>  
His letter there will show you his condition.<sup>o</sup> <sup>27</sup> {show you his estate}

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21. At this point, Bassanio is unaware that Lorenzo (and Jessica) stole away with Shylock's money (and have since been on the run). Portia knows nothing about Lorenzo, Jessica, nor anything of the events that have taken place in Venice. For the sake of drama, we must compress the inevitable time gap: Jessica and Lorenzo stole Shylock's money on the night that Bassanio left for Belmont; Bassanio forgoing the offer to tarry 'a day or two' immediately proceeded to his choice. This indicates that Bassanio left Venice no more than about two days ago, while several weeks of action have passed since Lorenzo and Jessica left Venice. For instance, Tubal went out in search of them in Genoa (which is some 200 miles distance from Venice). [See: Essays: *Time Warp*]

22. {And I have reason for it} Salerio does not offer any reason for it (for bringing along Lorenzo) since he could have delivered the message without any help; in addition, we know why he entreated Lorenzo to come with him to Belmont 'past all saying nay.' But what reasons might he have? It could be that Lorenzo was Bassanio's good and that Salerio—who was not such a friend, but only a messenger—was about to deliver some devastating news. Hence, Salerio thought it would be helpful if Lorenzo, Bassanio's good friend, were there to help comfort him. Understanding the gravity of the matter, Salerio may have insisted that Lorenzo come because of Jessica, and because he thought that she might be able to provide some help or shed some light on the situation (but this might be crediting Salerio with deep insight into the matter). As it turns out, Jessica's presence (not Lorenzo's) proves crucially important to the situation (and in Portia's decision to intervene).

23. {And I have reason for it: Signor Antonio | Commends him to you} / Sends you a message.

**commends him to you:** A familiar greeting, akin to 'Sends his regards' or 'Asks that you remember him.'

The passage would support Salerio's previous claim to having a 'reason,' if it had more import, such as: 'Signor Antonio | Sends you an urgent message.' This import could be imparted by adding the word 'urgent.' These extra syllables could be accommodated by deleting the two previous—somewhat superfluous—syllables, 'for it,' or truncating Bassanio's response (from five syllables to three).

/ And I have cause for it: Antonio sends | And urgent message.

/ And I have reason: for an urgent message | Comes from Antonio.

*Sal.:* / . . . | Sends you an urgent message. *Bas:* Ah, but first,

24. For dramatic purposes (and perhaps blinded by love) Bassanio is completely forgetful of the date that the bond expires: he is asking about how Antonio is doing {how my good friend doth} rather than the fate of the bond. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.231]

25. {Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind; | Nor well, unless in mind.}

Salerio's response is vague and elusive at best; Antonio is clearly in a desperate state and Salerio does not want to be the one to report such bad news. His vague answer means something like: he is not sick in terms of body, but sick if we are speaking about the state of his mind (i.e., he is worried, distraught, fearful, etc.); he is not well unless he imagines it to be so. Clearly he is not well. The wordplay is on the word *mind*, which in the first instance refers to his mental condition or state of mind and in the second refers to his imagination or use of mind. Some commentators, unable to make real sense out of this passage, interpret {unless in mind} to mean: 'unless his fortitude allows him to suffer his misfortune' (Kittredge); 'unless he is comforted by fortitude' (Brown)

26. Due to the vagueness of this unimportant passage it has herein been condensed into one line. If one desired to bring clarity to this response, the lines could be expanded:

/ Not sick, unless we speak about his mind;

/ Not sick, my lord, in terms of his body;

/ Nor well, unless he imagine it so.

/ Nor well, if speaking of his mental state.

27. / His note will show the state of his affairs.

*Bassanio opens the letter and reads it.*

—Gratziano

Nerissa cheer our guest,<sup>28</sup> [*Jessica*] entreat<sup>o</sup> her welcome.  
Your note,<sup>o</sup> Salerio. What news from Venice?  
How is<sup>o</sup> that royal merchant,<sup>30</sup> good Antonio?  
I know he will be glad of our success:  
Like the Jasons, we have won the fleece.

{bid} / beseech

{hand}<sup>29</sup>

{doth} / does / goes

/ Like Jason, we have wond the golden fleece

—Salerio

I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost.<sup>32</sup>  
[I loathe to say,<sup>o</sup> but all his ships are gone.]<sup>33</sup>

/ I tell you now

—Portia [*seeing Bassanio*]

Yon paper must display<sup>o</sup> some fell<sup>o</sup> content<sup>o</sup> <sup>34</sup>  
To steal<sup>o</sup> the color from Bassanio's cheek.  
Some dear friend dead?—else nothing in the world  
Could so completely turn the disposition<sup>o</sup> <sup>36</sup>  
Of any constant<sup>o</sup> man.<sup>37</sup> What, worse and worse?<sup>38</sup>

/ dispatch // cursed

{that steals}

/ full // steady nature

/ steadfast

*Bassanio looks worse than before*

With leave<sup>o</sup> Bassanio, I am half yourself,  
And I must freely have the half of all<sup>o</sup>

/ O please

{anything} / whate'er

---

28. {cheer yon stranger} Jessica, who was previously called 'infidel' is here referred to as 'stranger'—meaning an outsider, i.e., non-Christian. Thus Gratziano wants to make a special effort to welcome her.

29. **hand:** > the note or news you carry in your hand

30. **that royal merchant:** This address is somewhat aloof. Had Salerio been a friend of Antonio (as is Salarino and Salanio), Gratziano might have said, "How is our good friend, Antonio?" *Royal*, in this context, is a superlative meaning, 'princely,' 'grand,' 'great,' etc.

32. *Fleece* is a pun on *fleets*: I wish you had won the fleece [fleets] that he has lost, i.e., Antonio has lost all his fleets, and I wish the fleets that you had won could make up for his losses.

33. / I'm loathe to say it: all his ships are gone

*Grat:* We are the Jasons: both of us have won / We are the Argonauts, and we have won  
The golden fleece.

*Sal:* O had you won the fleece / I wish you'd won

That he hath lost: [for all his ships are gone.] / Alas, his ships are gone.

34. {There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper}

/ It seems yon paper holds some cursèd content / carries cursèd news / carries news afoul

**shrewd:** often interpreted to mean, 'evil,' 'cursed,' 'unfortunate,' 'harmful,' 'grievous' etc. but the term is more likely taken at face value, to mean, 'clever,' or 'crafty' (or 'sharp') in that the words are able to steal away (by some clever or tricky means) the color from Bassanio's face. We often see the word 'Beshrew' which is mild scold or swear.

36. {Could turn so much the constitution}

/ Could turn with such precision,<sup>o</sup> the nature / dreadfulness

/ Could so fully reverse<sup>o</sup> the disposition / alter

37. **constant man:** steady, unwavering, self-controlled

Portia is describing Bassanio as a *constant*, steadfast, reliable, and steady man. Clearly she is not aware of Bassanio's true character—as a irresponsible spendthrift and risk-taker. (But this is something she is going to soon learn about). Here she is judging him on her idealized and imagined version of him.

38. / Of such a self-controlled man. What, and worse?





The most benev'lent<sup>o</sup> and unwearied<sup>o</sup> spirit  
In serving others;<sup>o</sup> and one in whom  
The ancient Roman honour more appears  
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

{best-conditioned} / generous  
{in doing courtesies}  
/ Embodies more of ancient Roman honor  
/ Than any man who draws breath in Italia

—Portia

What sum owes he the Jew? <sup>55</sup>

—Bassanio

For me, three thousand ducats.

—Portia

What—no more?

Pay him six thousand and deface<sup>o</sup> the bond.  
Double six thousand and then triple<sup>o</sup> that <sup>56</sup>  
Before a friend of such kindness and worth<sup>o</sup> <sup>57</sup>  
Shall<sup>o</sup> lose a hair through<sup>o</sup> Bassanio's fault.  
First go with me to church and call me 'wife'<sup>o</sup>  
And then away to Venice, to your friend. <sup>58</sup>  
For never shall you lie by Portia's side  
With an unquiet soul. <sup>59</sup> You shall have gold  
To pay the petty debt twenty times over. <sup>60</sup>  
When it is paid, bring your friend home with you.  
Meanwhile, my good Nerissa and myself  
Will live as maids<sup>o</sup> and widows. Come, away,

/ delete / annul  
{treble}  
{this description}  
/ Should // through my  
/ and take your vows  
  
{My maid Nerissa and myself, meantime}  
/ virgins > as if unmarried

---

55. To preserve the meter, the verse could be rectified as follows:

*Portia:* What sum owes he the Jew?

*Bass:* Three thousand ducats.

*Portia:* A mere three thousand ducats—what no more?

56. / I'd double the six and triple that before . . .

Portia is offering to resolve the issue with a generous show of more and more money. At this point she is still unaware of, or unconvinced of, Shylock's resolve to take Antonio's flesh even after hearing from Salerio [3.2.270-2] and Jessica [3.2.284-85] that no amount of money would cause 'the Jew' to 'deface' the bond.

57. / Before a friend so endearing and true

58. This directive is to prompt the occupied Bassanio to the temple to take his wedding vows before he rushes off. Clearly Bassanio's concern for Antonio has eclipsed all the joy found in his newly won love and wealth. Note: there is no indication that rings were ever exchanged as part of this wedding ceremony.)

59. Portia is saying: I will not let you lie by my side with an unquiet soul (a restless and disturbed mind); I will only let you lie by my side when you can give yourself to me fully, when you can be with me whole-heartedly.

60. Again, Portia is not convinced of Shylock's true intention, nor that the bond cannot be cured with wealth—even with twenty times the amount owed—even though this is the specific number that Jessica previously mentions, saying, *That he would rather have Antonio's flesh | Than twenty time the value of the sum | That he did owe him.* [3.2.284-86]

For you shall hence<sup>o</sup> upon your wedding day.<sup>61 62</sup> / leave > go forth hence  
Since you were bought at O so dear a price / at such a heavy price  
I'll bear the wait for love<sup>o</sup> not once but twice.<sup>63 64</sup> / the weight of love

—Gratziano

But let us hear<sup>o</sup> the letter<sup>o</sup> from Antonio.<sup>65</sup> / But wait—let's hear

—Bassanio [*reads*]

'Dear Bassanio, my ships have all been lost,<sup>66</sup> my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit. And since in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I—if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, do as you please.<sup>67</sup> If your love does not persuade you to come, let not my letter.'

—Portia

O love, dispatch all business and be gone!<sup>o</sup> / betake your vows and then be gone

—Bassanio

Since I have your good leave to go away

---

61. / To wed me now and leave upon the day!

62. / We'll live as widows. Come, no more delay | You'll marry me now and leave the same day!

63. In Q1, the rhyming couplet is as follows:

{Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer,  
{Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.}

Many commentators are troubled by this closing line, feeling that it shows Portia as indelicate and insensitive. There are several possible interpretations, the foremost being somewhat negative: Portia having paid dearly for Bassanio (in terms of a high price and hardship) will now love him dearly (i.e. painfully) because he is absent. Somewhat positively, it would be interpreted as such "Since you are dear bought (paid for with a high personal sacrifice) I will love you dear (with the same sacrifice) which is forced upon me, as I now have to postpone my wedding night and again wait for you." Said another way, I have already waited so long for love (dearly bought), that I am willing to wait a little longer.

[See Additional Notes, 3.2.311]

64. / Since you have come<sup>o</sup> at such a heavy<sup>o</sup> price, {were bought} / were found // tearful

/ Since I have paid and paid<sup>o</sup> so dear a price / I have suffered / you have come at oh

/ I'll dearly wait for you, not once but twice

/ I'll thus<sup>o</sup> await your love not once but twice. / I will

/ You're worth<sup>o</sup> the long delay not once but twice / I'll bear

65. {Portia: But let me hear the letter of your friend.}

/ But let us hear what Antonio has written / But let us hear the good Antonio's letter

Due to Portia's double-rhyming couplet (which typically signifies the end of scene) many editors believe that the following lines, including Bassanio's reading of Antonio's letter, were later additions. In support of this, Q1 contains no speech heading for Bassanio (signifying him to read Antonio's letter) and several anomalous line spaces have found their way into the text (before and after Antonio's letter, and after Bassanio's closing lines). In standard copy, no such line spaces would appear.

It appears that these lines were added, in a later draft, to indicate the urgent nature of the crisis and give cause for Portia's intervention. Hence, to preserve the integrity of Portia's rhyming couplet, this request to hear Antonio's letter is given to Gratziano—who has, up to this point, remained curiously silent. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.312]

66. **been lost:** {miscarried}

67. {use your pleasure} / do as your heart now bids you.

I will make haste, but I go in dismay  
All beds that beckon, I'll solemnly spurn, °  
And slumber ne'er ° a wink, til I return. <sup>70</sup>

/ All beds that call, I will solemnly spurn  
/ And shall not sleep

*Exeunt* <sup>71</sup>

---

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70. The original reads:

“Since I have your good leave to go away,  
I will make haste, but till I come again,  
No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,  
Nor rest be interposed ‘twixt us twain.”

Here Bassanio makes the customary vow of the romantic hero—which is that he will not sleep until the task is completed and he returns to his beloved. This passage remains a vestige of the fairy tale qualities of a romantic hero and not a vow one should take at face value. [See Additional Notes, 3.2.324]

71. A comical stage direction could be as follows: *Bassanio rushes to make a hasty exit, stage right—toward Venice—but is caught by the elbow, and swung do-see-do, to stage left by Portia—toward the church.*

*A street outside Shylock's house.*

*Enter Shylock,<sup>1</sup> Antonio, [Salarino, Salanio, and a Jailor.]<sup>2</sup>*

—Shylock<sup>3</sup>

Jailor, keep your watch.<sup>o</sup> Tell me not of mercy.

{Jailor look to him} / Keep watch on him

This is the fool who lends<sup>o</sup> out money gratis.

{that lent} {F1: that lends} / who loans

Jailor, keep your watch.<sup>o</sup>

{look to him}

—Antonio                      Hear me yet, good Shylock.

— Shylock

⟨ Now I am “good”? I say,<sup>o</sup> my bond is good! ⟩<sup>4</sup>

/ Methinks

I'll have my bond.<sup>o</sup> Speak not against my bond.

/ And I'll have it

I've sworn an oath that I will have my bond.<sup>5</sup>

You call'dst me 'dog' before you hadst a cause,

But since I am a dog, beware my fangs.

The Duke shall<sup>6</sup> grant me justice. I do<sup>o</sup> wonder,

/ but

Thou wicked<sup>o</sup> jailor, why art thou so foolish<sup>o</sup>

{naughty} / corrupt {fond} / stupid

To let him walk about<sup>o</sup> at his request.<sup>7</sup>

{To come abroad with him}

1. The stage direction of Q1 reads 'Enter the *Jew*' and all speech headings read '*Jew*.' (The actual reading is 'Enter the *Jew*,' as *I* was often replaced *J*.)

2. The stage direction of Q1 reads:

Enter the *Jew*, and *Salerio*, and *Anthonio*,  
and the Jailor.

The name *Salerio* in the stage heading (instead of *Salarino* or *Salanio*) is likely an error made by the compositor (or print house editor). The original stage heading may have read: 'Enter the *Jew*, *Anthonio*, and others'—where the 'others' was meant to indicate *Salarino* and *Salanio* and the Jailor, but not *Salerio*. (Another anomaly in this stage direction is that the name of a minor character, *Salerio*, appears before *Anthonio*.) *Salerio*, as we know, is in Belmont delivering a message to Bassanio and could not be present in this scene. Most editors rectify this error in the stage heading by replacing 'Salerio' with 'Salanio' (or *Salanio*), assuming that there is a one-to-one correspondence between *Salerio* and one of the two other *Sals*. (Q2 replaces *Salerio* with *Salarino*, while F1 has *Solanio*). Thus, this scene is almost always played with *Salanio* alone, or in some cases with *Salarino* alone, but not with both characters present, which is the most likely scenario. In sum, the name of *Salerio* in the stage direction is clearly an error but the replacement of *Salerio* with either *Salanio* or *Salarino* is also not certain. Since *Salarino* and *Salanio* always appear together, it is most likely that both *Salarino* and *Salanio* were intended to appear in this scene as well. [See Additional Notes, 3.3.0a]

3. In this scene Shylock is dwelling in the newfound sense of power he has over Antonio by not letting Antonio speak. [See Additional Notes, 3.3.0]

4. **good**: reference is made to the double meaning of this word: *good* in the sense of being righteous, and *good* in the sense of being sound and firm. A similar play on the word *good* was made in 1.3.12-17 when Shylock says to Bassanio, *Antonio is a good man*—not meaning that he is a man who is good (i.e., who has a good character) but a man who is sufficient (good to cover the loan).

5. Why, and for what purpose, does Shylock tell Antonio that he has sworn an oath? What does this accomplish for Shylock? [See Additional Notes, 3.3.5]

6. **shall**: > a) must, b) will

7. {Thou naughty jailor, thou that art so fond | To come abroad with him at his request.}

**naughty**: unfit, no good, corrupt, foolish

**to come abroad**: to walk outside the jail, in the street

[See Additional Notes, 3.3.10]



Therefore he hates me.<sup>19</sup>

/ That's why / 'Tis why

—Salarino                    I am sure the Duke  
Will never grant° this forfeiture to hold.

/ not allow

—Antonio

The Duke cannot deny° the course° of law.  
For the commercial rights° that traders° have  
With us in Venice—if it be denied—

/ refuse / force > forward movement

{ commodity } { strangers }

/ if 'tis not upheld

Will much impeach° the justice of the state,<sup>20</sup>

/ impugn / impair

And such will harm the city, which is port  
Of trade to every nation. Therefore, go.

These griefs and losses have so bated° me<sup>22</sup>

/ weakened

That when my bloody bondsman° calls tomorrow

{ creditor }

I'll barely have° a pound of flesh to spare.

/ I will not have

Well Jailer, on. Pray God° Bassanio come

/ I pray / Pray good

To see me pay his debt,° and then I care not.<sup>24 25</sup>

/ I'm content

*Exeunt*

---

19. Antonio is recounting the many times that men would borrow money from Shylock, under a contract which they likely did not understand, and which served as a kind of entrapment; the contract contained the condition that if they could not pay amounted to the loss of all their goods and property. When men were caught in this predicament they would come and bemoan their fate to Antonio who, out of Christian charity, would loan them money, *gratis*, so that they could pay off the loan and avoid the ruinous forfeiture. Thus Antonio's practice of loaning out money *gratis* 'robbed' Shylock of all the extra profit he was eager to extract from his victims. This is likely the primary cause of Shylock's anger and not so much that Antonio "lends out money gratis and brings down | The rate of usance here with us in Venice." [1.3.44-45]

20. / Will cast fair doubt on our good claim to justice / Will strip the state of all its claim to justice

22. **bated**: abated, reduced, diminished, enfeebled; implying a lose of weight.

{ These griefs and losses have so baited me | That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh | Tomorrow to my bloody creditor. }

24. / Yet one more time before I pay his debt.

25. These two lines found in the original—which contain a death-defying plea to see Bassanio one more time—seem misplaced and over-the-top but consistent with Antonio's obsession with Bassanio. Here, his desire to see Bassanio surpasses even his concern for life. This overweening sentiment weakens Antonio's character and even suggests some kind of compulsive pathology.

*Belmont. Enter Portia, Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica, and Balthazar, Portia's servant*

—Lorenzo

Although I pause to speak it in your presence, <sup>2</sup>	/ Madam, though I'm not want offer praise
You show a true and noble understanding <sup>3</sup>	{ You have a noble and true conceit }
Of godlike friendship, ° which appears most strongly °	{ amity } // so fully
In bearing thus the absence of your lord.	
But if you knew to whom you show this honor, ° <sup>4</sup>	/ favor
How true a gentleman you deem to help, °	{ send relief }
How dear he's held within ° thine husband's heart <sup>5</sup>	/ placèd in / placed within
I know you would be prouder of this work <sup>6</sup>	
Than from the customary ° acts ° of kindness <sup>7</sup>	/ usual / common { works } / deeds
That your good ° nature moves you to perform. <sup>8 9</sup>	/ Your godly nature

---

1. At this point Portia has decided to go to Venice and intervene on Antonio's behalf. But upon what information has she come to make this decision? Initially she thought that her tens of thousands of ducats would be enough to save Antonio despite Jessica's statement, 'That he would rather have Antonio's flesh | Than twenty times the value of the sum.' [3.2.284-85]. However, something has since changed her mind and now she believes that neither her money nor the justice system of Venice nor Bassanio's wit would be sufficient to save Antonio, so she concludes that she must go to Venice and intervene. This change in Portia's opinion (and course of action) could only have come about as a result of her continued conversation with Jessica. We are not clear on how Portia came to conclude that only her legal intervention could help Antonio especially since she had no legal training, no knowledge of Venetian law, nor was she familiar with the specifics of the case. We are also not clear as to how she knew that her cousin, Bellario, had been summoned by the Duke to rule on the case—and was too sick to do so—unless she had received some kind of communication from Bellario.

To indicate this continuing conversation between Portia and Jessica (which began in 3.2) the two could be seen entering the scene together (ahead of the others), in conversation. [See Additional Notes, 3.4.0]

2. The sense may be that it is impolite to praise a person in his/her own presence—as this might cause embarrassment (to those who would be modest) or self-aggrandizement (to those inclined in this direction).

3. {Madam, although I speak it in your presence }

/ Madam, I pause to say it is your presence, | Yet you show true and noble understanding

4. {But if you knew to whom you show this honor }

/ But if you knew the one whom you thus honor

5. {How dear a lover of my lord your husband }

/ How dear he's placèd in your husband's heart

6. / You'd be more honored by this virtuous work ° / kindly act / generous deed

7. / Than from the custom'ry displays of kindness

8. / Your gen'rous nature moves you to perform / Than your good heart obliges you to enact

9. {Than customary bounty can enforce you } / Than from obliged acts of charity

**customary:** usual, regular, standard

**bounty:** goodness, benevolence, generosity, overflowing kindness, etc.

**enforce you:** prompt, impel, incline you; make you feel

Herein, the original line has been expanded into two lines. The sense here is that the act of kindness Portia is performing (in helping Antonio) would be more pleasing to her than from the usual and regular acts of kindness that she, out of the goodness of her heart, is wont to perform. This action goes above and beyond the normal generosity (the *customary bounty*) of her usual charitable acts.

Various editors interpret this line as follows: 'Than your wonted generosity make you feel' (Cam); 'Than ordinary acts of kindness allow you to feel' (Appl); 'Than ordinary acts of kindness can incline you to be' (Ar); 'Than your usual acts of benevolence make you perform' (Ox).

—Portia

I never praised myself <sup>o</sup> for doing good, <sup>10</sup>	{ did repent }
And <sup>o</sup> shall not now; for in companions <sup>o</sup> —	{ Nor }
Who do converse and pass <sup>o</sup> their time together,	{ waste } / spend
Whose souls do bear an equal <sup>o</sup> yoke of love— <sup>11</sup>	/ are joined by the same
There must be needs a like proportion <sup>12</sup>	
Of character, <sup>o</sup> of manners, and of spirit, <sup>13</sup>	{ lineaments }
Which makes me think that this Antonio,	
Being the dearest comrade <sup>o</sup> of my lord, <sup>14</sup>	{ bosom lover }
Must needs be like my lord. If it be so,	
How little is the cost I have bestowed <sup>o</sup>	/ put forth / tendered
In rescuing <sup>o</sup> the semblance <sup>o</sup> of my soul <sup>15</sup>	{ purchasing } // likeness
From out the state <sup>o</sup> of hellish cruelty.	/ From this affront
This comes too near the <sup>o</sup> praising of myself <sup>16</sup>	/ This near approaches
Therefore, no more of it. Hear <sup>o</sup> other things:	/ Now
Lorenzo, I commit into <sup>o</sup> your hands,	/ transfer unto
The oversight <sup>o</sup> and <sup>o</sup> manage of my house <sup>17</sup>	{ husbandry }
Until my lord's return. For mine own part,	
I have toward heaven breathed a secret vow	
To live in prayer and contemplation, <sup>18</sup>	
Only attended by Nerissa here,	
Until her husband and my lord's <sup>o</sup> return.	/ lord
There is a monastery two miles off, <sup>19</sup>	

---

10. { I never did repent<sup>o</sup> for doing good } / regret / seek praise

/ I ne'er did pride myself for doing good

11. / Whose souls unite by the same yoke of love

12. { There must be needs a like proportion }

/ There must be needs a likeness of manner / Must share an inclination of like manner

13. / . . . a like proportion of | Characteristics, manner, and of spirit,

/ . . . a like proportion | Of character, sentiment, and of spirit

/ Must share a like proportion of manner | Of character, sentiment, and of spirit

14. / Being my lord's most true and dearest friend / Being the dearest-most friend of my lord

15. / How little is the price I pay to save | One, so like one, with whom I share a soul

16. { This comes too near the praising of myself }

/ This comes too near to mine own self-endorsement!

/ This near approaches self-praise and conceit

17. / The running and management of my house / The management and care of my estate

18. Here Portia is saying she has made a vow to heaven, when clearly she has not. This white lie gives her an unsuspecting reason to leave the estate for a few days.

19. **a monastery two miles off:** This suggests that Belmont is an island, which is close enough to the mainland to be connected by a bridge, or that it is a peninsula which appears to be an island as one approaches it from the sea. Lines 3.4.81-84 (where Portia indicates a 20 miles journey by coach, to Padua) and the arrival of other characters, by foot, also suggests that Belmont is connected to the mainland.

And there we will abide. I do ask of° you,  
Not to deny this sudden° imposition,<sup>20</sup>  
The which my love and some necessity°  
Now lays upon you.

{desire} / request  
/ heavy  
/ more pressing needs

—Lorenzo                    Madam, with all my heart  
I shall obey you in all fair commands.°

/ you request

—Portia  
My people do already know my mind°  
And will acknowledge° you and Jessica  
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.  
So fare you well till we shall meet again.

/ wish  
/ recognize / accept both

—Lorenzo  
Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you! °

/ happiness all be with you!

—Jessica [*turning back toward Portia*]  
I wish your ladyship all° heart's content.

/ you, dear lady, all / your lady every

—Portia  
I thank you for your wish, and am well-pleased  
To wish the same for you.° Fare you well, Jessica.<sup>21</sup>

{it back on you}

### *Exeunt Jessica and Lorenzo*

Now, Balthazar,<sup>22</sup>  
As I have ever found thee true and honest,°  
So let me find thee still. Take this same letter,  
And use thou all thy acumen and skill°<sup>23</sup>  
In speed° to Padua. See thou render° this  
Into the hands of my cousin, Bellario,<sup>24</sup>

{honest true} / plain and true  
{th'endeavour of a man}  
/ haste / giveth

20. {Not to deny this imposition} / Not to deny this imposing request

To fulfill the meter, *imposition*, would be pronounced as: IMpoZIseeOWN

21. Portia's farewell is directed to Jessica alone. The most likely scenario is that Portia is closer to Jessica, and perhaps face-to-face with Jessica, holding her at elbow's length, and mentions her name to indicate a more personal farewell. Some productions, feeling the need to have Portia and Jessica alone on stage, have Jessica suddenly running back (as she and Lorenzo are exiting) to bid Portia farewell. Such a staging, however, draws too much attention to itself and is not necessary.

22. Portia uses the name of her servant, *Balthazar*, when she comes into court dressed as a man

23. {And use thou all th'endeavour of a man} / And use the fullest of thy manly prowess / And use thou all thy gained skill and power / And use thou all your manly skill and power

24. Portia's seeming plan to have Bellario provide her with all the books and garments she needs, as well as a glowing letter of recommendation to appear in Bellario's stead—is contingent upon: a) her knowing that Bellario had since been requested, by the Duke, to oversee this matter in Venice, b) that Bellario was too ill to comply, and c) her confidence in her ability to school herself in all matters of Venetian law, in one night (or more), so she could credibly rule over the matter. A more likely plan would be for Portia to visit Bellario, where they could study the case together, and where she could receive expert legal advice. Portia making such a journey to Padua would have taken the same amount of travel time as Balthazar, who was instructed to go to Padua, find Bellario, get the items, and then meet Portia at the ferry landing (on the mainland) where the ferry leaves for Venice. [See Additional Notes, 3.4.55]

⟨Who is a most learned doctor of law. ⟩<sup>25</sup>

And look<sup>o</sup> what notes and garments he doth give thee, / take  
Bring them, I pray, with all imagined speed  
Unto the landing<sup>o</sup> of the common ferry {traject}  
Which trades<sup>o</sup> to Venice. Waste no time in words > travels back and forth  
But get thee gone. I shall be there before thee.<sup>26</sup>

—Balthazar

Madam, I go with all availing<sup>o</sup> speed. {convenient} / available / possible

### *Exit*

—Portia

Come on, Nerissa. I have work in hand  
That you have yet to know.<sup>o</sup> We'll see our husbands {That you yet know not of}  
Before they think of us.<sup>27</sup>

—Nerissa                      Shall they see us?

—Portia

They shall, Nerissa, but in such a manner<sup>o</sup> {habit} / garb / in such apparel  
That they shall think we are but well-equipped<sup>o</sup> {accomplishèd} / well-endowed  
With what<sup>o</sup> we lack.<sup>28</sup> I'll hold<sup>o</sup> thee any wager<sup>29</sup> {that} // stake  
That when we're both accoutered<sup>o</sup> like young men / attired  
I'll prove the prettier<sup>30</sup> fellow<sup>o</sup> of the two, / more convincing / bolder fellow

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25. / One of Italia's greatest legal minds / Who wields considerable legal skill / Who doth possess the greatest legal mind

26. The plan outlined here is ill-conceived. The more likely plan would be for Portia to send a letter to Bellario, telling him that she would be visiting him that night, to go through the books, and to come up with a legal strategy by which she, acting in his stead, could save Antonio. (Bellario, as we learn later in the play, received a letter from the Duke and was already familiar with the matter.) The scenario outlined here would be consistent with logic, efficiency, and with Bellario's letter to the Duke, where he says: 'We turned o'er many books together,' and 'He is furnished with my opinion.' [4.1.154-55])

In terms of a production, realism at this point is not crucial and the audience can be relied upon to forgive the gaps in Portia's plan. Thus, the original lines could be preserved without any appreciable loss. In the original, no meeting takes place: Balthazar is instructed to pick up various books and garments from Bellario, and a) a letter of recommendation to the court (which was read by the Duke 4.1.149-163) b) a letter that outlines a legal opinion which Portia could use to save Antonio) and then meet Portia at the ferry port (*traject*) where the ferry travels back and forth ('trades') between the mainland and Venice.

27. **before they think of us:** a) before they think about us (being so busy with their own affairs), b) before the think of seeing us, before they think they will be going to see us (i.e., upon their return to Belmont)

28. In other words, they shall think we are men

29. / I'll bet thee any sum

30. **prettier:** more pleasing, more gallant, more manly

And wear my dagger with the braver grace,<sup>31</sup> / bolder sway  
 And show the piping voice of some fair yonker / reeded  
 Not yet a man.<sup>32</sup> And turn two mincing steps  
 Into a manly stride; and speak of brawls  
 Like a fine, bragging youth; and tell quaint lies  
 How noble ladies sought my manly love  
 Which when denied they soon fell sick and died.<sup>34</sup>  
 I could not *do* them all.<sup>35</sup> Then I'll repent {do withal} / help it / do otherwise  
 And wish for all that my charm<sup>o</sup> had not killed them.<sup>36</sup> {that I}  
 And I'll tell twenty of these puny<sup>o</sup> lies,<sup>37</sup> / empty / brainless  
 That men shall swear I had dropped out of<sup>o</sup> school {have discontinued}  
 Aft' but one year.<sup>o</sup> I have within my mind<sup>38</sup> {Above a twelvemonth}  
 A thousand raw<sup>o</sup> tricks of these bragging Jacks<sup>o</sup> / boys / youths  
 Which I will practice.<sup>o</sup><sup>39</sup> / use

—Nerissa                      Why, shall we turn to men?<sup>40</sup>

—Portia  
 Fie, what a question that is!<sup>o</sup> <Shall we turn / lewd question!

31. The brave wearing of one's dagger (or sword) can be seen as a phallic symbol, and a symbol of one's manhood.

32. {And speak between the change of man and boy | With a reed voice}

34. And speak a vocal pitch<sup>o</sup> that comes between / reed-like voice / piping voice

The change from boy to man; and I will turn

Two mincing<sup>o</sup> steps into a manly stride, / dainty

And speak of brawls<sup>o</sup> like a fine, bragging youth; {frays} / fights

And tell fantastic<sup>o</sup> lies, how noble ladies {quaint} / concocted / far-fetchèd

Did seek my manly love, which when denied / my love which, upon my denial,

Led them unto despair and death by heartbreak<sup>o</sup>— / They fell to sickness and died of heartbreak

35. {I could not do withal} I could not do anything about it; I could not help it. Pun on the word *do*—I could not *do* (make love with) them all, thus suggesting that the woman he could not (or would not) make love with, fell sick and died of heartbreak.

36. {And wish for all that, that I had not killed them}

/ And wish my darling<sup>o</sup> had not killed them so. / mantrap / beauty / charming

**for all that:** for having refused them / for all the actions which were beyond my control / "in spite of that — that I could not prevent their dying." (Kit)

37. {And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell}

38. {Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind} / More than a year ago. I have in mind

**above a twelvemonth:** a) after one year, b) more than a year ago, above a year

39. The lines uttered by Portia show her total embrace of her assumed role as a man, but what she portrays here has nothing to do with the legal garb, and corresponding manner, she is going to show in court. We can see Portia's willingness to embrace this male role (and come full out of her docile romantic princess mode) as a metaphor for her leaving the fairy-tale world of Belmont and coming into the thick of the Venetian world. In this description, as in 1.2, we see her mocking men and their ways. Portia's ready acceptance of her male role (even more so than is required) is in full contrast to Jessica's embarrassment and 'shame' at having to simply dress up as a boy—and make a clandestine escape.

40. **turn to men:** Nerissa surmises that as part of the plan that they will "turn into men" (disguise themselves as men); Portia then plays upon another possible meaning, suggesting that (if she interpreted Nerissa's meaning in a lewd way) she might think Nerissa is suggesting that they turn to, or approach, men for sexual satisfaction.

To men for carnal pleasure?—I think not!<sup>41</sup> }<sup>42</sup>  
But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device<sup>o</sup>  
When we are in my coach, which stays<sup>o</sup> for us  
At the main<sup>o</sup> gate; and therefore haste away,<sup>o</sup>  
For we must journey<sup>o</sup> twenty miles today.

/ of my good plan  
/ waits  
{park}<sup>43</sup>  
{measure}/ travel

*Exeunt*

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41. / To men to satisfy our needs? Fie, fie!

42. {Fie, what a question's that? | If thou wert near a lewd interpreter!}  
/ Fie, what a question's that? | We shall not turn to men for carnal favors!  
[See Additional Notes, 3.4.80]

43. **park gate:** the gate leading beyond the grounds, beyond the estate surrounding the mansion

ACT THREE - Scene Five <sup>1</sup>

[Optional Scene—replaces 3.5 in the original]

*Venice. Shylock's House.*

*Shylock is in his house, feeling sad and by his daughter's betrayal, but also angry.<sup>2</sup> He picks up the bond, glances over it, and tucks it away. He readies his bag. He takes apart the scale and places it into the bag. He picks up a one-pound weight, gauges its weight by lifting it up and down in his hand, and places it in the bag. He goes to his knife collection and ponders which knife to use; he selects the most ominous-looking one, which is thick and pointed, and places the knife in his bag.<sup>3 4</sup>*

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1. Act 3, Scene 5, as found in the original, is a 'filler' scene that provides a light-hearted distraction and some psychological time between the previous scene in Belmont and the next scene in Venice. Nothing is advanced in the scene. The quality of this scene (especially the first half) is tiresome and lacking. At the onset of the scene, Launcelet is oddly confronting and harsh; it is unlikely that he would address Jessica in such a cruel manner (as they were friends and allies during his term with Shylock) though some have argued that Jessica, now a Christian, is 'fair game for Launcelet's foolery.' Moreover, Launcelet's fluency with Homer's *The Odyssey* is questionable; his banter with Lorenzo is dull; and the later conversation between Lorenzo and Jessica is uninspired. Due to the weakness of the scene, some scholars have doubted its authenticity and virtually all productions simply delete it.

Though the original scene is lacking and anomalous some scene may be needed here to provide time for the main characters to reach Venice. In this emendation, 3.5 is replaced with scene involving Shylock. Another possibility would be to import the early portions of 5.1, which involve Lorenzo and Jessica. Specifically, 5.1.1-21 and 5.1.54-109, or some portion thereof, could be included here to replace the original scene. This importation would have the added benefit of reducing the length of Act Five and bring the story to a swift conclusion after its crescendo at the end of the trial scene. As it now stands, the concluding Act Five is too long and most productions seek ways to reduce it. It was a common practice before 1800 to simply omit Act Five altogether rather than tax the audience with the long tie up of loose ends after the dramatic close of the court scene. However, such aggressive editing is neither recommended nor acceptable.

The filler scene provided here—which replaces the original—can be staged in one of three ways: a) Shylock appears alone, without any spoken lines, b) Shylock appears alone, then Tubal enters, then a short dialogue between the two takes place that reveals Shylock's motivation to *not kill* Antonio (but only to torture him psychologically) even though this goes against what Shylock has already stated, or c) Shylock appears alone, then Tubal enters, then a dialogue between the two takes place that supports Shylock's already-stated intention to kill Antonio.

Option b is problematic. Its insertion might serve, somewhat, to redeem Shylock's character but it would change the vector of the play; and to support this change major portions of dialogue would have to be changed. [See Additional Notes, 3.5.0]

2. Previously, when there was an object for its expression (Antonio), we see Shylock able to express his anger and rage; here, in isolation, only sadness penetrates, and, for the first time, he feels a deep and alien sense of loss: "The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now."

3. To include an element of black humor, Shylock could be made to test the sharpness of his blade on a tomato (which may or may not be a symbol for the heart). In his first try, he finds the blade to be hopelessly dull and squashes the tomato instead of cleanly cutting it. In frustration, he discards the knife and tries another, with equal lack of success. (Perhaps the knives are dull because Launcelet is no longer there to sharpen them.) Shylock picks up the first knife again, wipes the knife with a towel, and puts it into his bag. (He will sharpen the blade on the sole of his shoe at a later time).

One could also add a symbolic element here and have Shylock mistakenly cut himself with one of the knives as he is distractedly testing it. This notion reflects a line from the ancient Chinese text, the *Tao Te Ching*, which states: "He who kills is like he who cuts with the blade of the Great Wood-Carver. Truly, whoever cuts with the blade of the Great Wood-Carver is likely cut himself." (Verse 74)

4. The scene could end here (without any words spoken and without the entrance of Tubal). Ending the scene here would accentuate Shylock's sense of aloneness. This speechless scene could be used in a production that stays true to the original text—such 'trueness' allows for additional staging (and deletions of text) but does not tolerate the addition of any new dialogue. The general rule allows for some archaic words to be modernized and for a character to say the name of another character, even if that name does not appear in the text. (For example, some productions have Shylock call out 'Jessica, Jessica' upon his return from Bassanio's dinner, even though her name—and this direction to call out her name—does not appear in the original text.)

*Enter Tubal*

—Tubal

Damn you Shylock! How far do you intend to go with this heinous act?

—Shylock

Until the very end.<sup>6</sup>

—Tubal

'Tis a cruel and ungodly course you take. Just take the principal—or double—and be done with it.

—Shylock

Why does Antonio spit on me? Why do Christians despise us? We are not like them—thus, they cannot see us. But now they will see. Now they must look upon the Jew and hear him. I will play this hand til the very end.

—Tubal

What end?

—Shylock

I will torment him as he has tormented me. I will make him feel as he has made me feel. I will teach him something he will not soon forget. They have pleaded with me. They have asked me to alter my course. It is now I who cannot hear them. Antonio, the Duke, and all the magnificoes have pleaded with me but I will not hear them. I need not hear them.

—Tubal

This will only bring a curse upon our nation. It will lead to ruin. I say, stop this madness, take twice the principle and be done with it.

*Shylock and Tubal exit in opposite directions*

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6. A few lines of explanatory dialogue, relating to the oath that Shylock made, could be inserted here. [See Additional Notes, 3.5.02]

ACT FOUR — Scene One

Venice. A court of justice. Enter the Duke, the Magnificoes, Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, and others.

—Duke

What,° is Antonio here? / Well

—Antonio Ready,° so please your grace.<sup>1</sup> / I am

—Duke

I am sorry for thee. Thou art° come to answer° You've // You've come against  
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch  
Incapable of pity—void,<sup>2</sup> and empty° / and lacking / without  
From any hint° of mercy. {dram}

—Antonio I have heard  
Your grace hath ta'en° great pains to modify°<sup>3</sup> / borne {qualify} / mollify  
His savage° course, but since he stands unshaken° {rigorous} {obdurate} / unmovèd  
And, as° no lawful means can carry° me {that} / since // render / deliver  
Beyond° his envy's reach, I do oppose° {Out of} // pit against  
My patience to his fury, and am armed<sup>5</sup> / braced / ready  
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,  
The very tyranny and rage of his.<sup>6</sup> / he portions / he levies

—Duke

Go one, and° call the Jew into the court. > Someone go,

—Salerio

He's ready at the door. He comes, my lord.

*Enter Shylock*<sup>7</sup>

1. The first three lines of the original play have six iambs (twelve syllables) as opposed to the standard iambic pentameter.

2. **void:** > a) heartless, b) without Christian grace

3. / taken great measures° to curb / utmost pains

5. {My patience to his fury, and am armed} / His fury with my patience; I am braced

**patience:** *Patience*, as used in this context, is somewhat synonymous with *forbearance*, and suggests to the Renaissance virtue which is advocated as the best way to meet adversity. [*Lear* 1.4.240, 2.2. 445]. More deeply, it refers to faith in God and the short-term corporeal suffering which is often needed to bring about long-term and divine gain. "The ability to bear misfortune with confidence in the ultimate justice and goodness of God. This is a Christian notion not to be confused with classical Stoicism." (Kit).

6. {The very tyranny and rage of his.} / The very brunt and tyranny of his rage.

7. The stage heading in Q1 reads, *Enter Shylocke*, yet the speech headings shift—without reason—between *Jew* and *Shy*.

**Iewe (or Iew):** [34—*I have possessed your grace*, 64, 66, 68, 84, 88, 121, 126, 138, 173]

**Shy:** [180—*On what compulsion must I?*, 203, 220, 223, 225, 232, 243]

**Iew (or Jew):** [247—*'Tis very true, O wise and upright judge*, 249, 253, 256, 259, 292, 298, 301]

**Shy:** [311—*Is that the law?*]

**Iew:** [315—*I take this offer then, pay the bond thrice*]

**Shy:** [332—*Give me my principal and let me go*, 338, 341, 370, 389, 391, 394] Note: the speech heading of line 394—*In christening shalt thou have two Godfathers*—attributes the line to Shylock {*Shy.*} which is clearly in error—the line belongs to Gratiano.

—Duke

Make room, and let him stand before our face. ...<sup>8</sup>

Shylock,<sup>9</sup> the world thinks—and I think so too—

That thou but leadest<sup>o</sup> this fashion of thy malice

/ lead / forward

To the last hour of act<sup>o</sup> and then, 'tis thought,

/ Until the final hour

Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse; <and yet

This ill-conceived<sup>o</sup> action is e'er<sup>e</sup> more strange<sup>o</sup> <sup>10</sup>

/ ill-advised / queer / baffling

Than is the strangeness of thy feigned<sup>o</sup> cruelty. <sup>11</sup>

{ apparent } / open / obvious

And where thou now exact'st<sup>o</sup> the penalty,<sup>12</sup>

/ demand / exact

Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,

Thou wilt not only waive<sup>o</sup> the forfeiture<sup>o</sup>

{ loose } // pardon all the fees

But, touched with human<sup>o</sup> gentleness and love,<sup>o</sup>

{ humane } // kindness and compassion

Forgive a portion<sup>o</sup> of the principal,<sup>o</sup>

{ moiety }

And glance<sup>o</sup> an eye<sup>o</sup> of pity on his losses <sup>13</sup>

{ Glancing } / Showing // Shedding a tear

That have of late so huddled on his back,

Enough to press a royal merchant down. <sup>14</sup>

/ burden a royal merchant

And such a loss<sup>o</sup> should pluck a strain of pathos <sup>15</sup>

/ A loss so great

From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,

From stubborn<sup>o</sup> brutes and warriors<sup>o</sup> never trained <sup>16</sup>

/ faithless {Turks and Tartars}

In such demeanor that were soft and tender. <sup>17</sup>

We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

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8. > have him stand in such a way that we can clearly see him

9. Though the Duke is partial to Antonio's plight (as evidenced in the opening lines of the scene) here he is showing deference to Shylock (and giving him the opportunity to change his position) by asking others to make room for him and by calling him by his name.

10. {Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange}

/ This ill-conceived course is even more strange / And yet this course conceived is e'en more strange / Yet this recourse is even more bizarre / Yet such an ill-bred action is e'en more queer

/ That thou wilt show thy mercy and remorse; | Yet such a course is even more bizarre

11. {Than is thy strange apparent cruelty}

**apparent:** a) obvious, visible, b) show of, what appears to be

12. / Thou'lt show thy mercy; yet such course is stranger | Than is the strangeness of thy apparent |

/ Yet this conceived course is even more strange | Then is the strangeness of thy apparent |

/ Cruelty. And where you now demand the forfeit,

13. / And looking on his losses with some pity

14. {Enough to press a royal merchant down} / And now do burden a royal merchant

It is odd that the Duke is calling for Shylock to take pity on Antonio and forgive some portion of the principal (in light of Shylock's overtly merciless intentions). Having the Duke call on Shylock to forgive the forfeiture (and then have Antonio pay him back when he was able) would be more likely an appeal. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.28]

15. {And pluck commiseration of his state}

/ Such loss would pluck a strain of pathos, e'en / a requiem of pity / a dirge of remorse

> And bring about some pity (in your heart) as a result of his (unfortunate) condition

16. {From stubborn Turks and Tartars never trained | To offices of tender courtesy}

**Turks:** generally classed with Jews, infidels, and heretics—i.e., those in need of redemption

**Tartars:** the brutal and bellicose warriors who made up the hordes of Ghengis Khan

17. {From stubborn Turks and Tartars never trained | To offices of tender courtesy}

/ From stubborn brutes and vicious fighters ne'er | Trained in demeanor that were soft or tender

—Shylock

I have informed° your grace of my intention,°	{ possessed } { of what I purpose }
And by our holy God of Hosts° I've sworn <sup>18 19</sup>	{ Sabaoth }
To have the due° and forfeit of my bond. <sup>20</sup>	/ debt > the amount owed
If you deny it, let disaster fall°	{ the danger light } / the doubt be cast
Upon your charter and your city's freedom. <sup>21</sup>	/ fall 'pon / alight
You'll ask me why I rather choose to have	
A pound° of carrion° flesh than to receive	{ weight } // lifeless
Three thousand ducats? I'll not answer that	
But say it is my bent°— <sup>22</sup> <The way my nature	{ humour }
Has come to fashion me.> Now is it answered?	
What if my house be troubled with° a rat	/ by
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats	
To have it banned?° Well,° are you answered yet?	/ killed { What } / Now

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18. / And by God's holy army have I sworn  
/ And by our trust in God's holy° army, / righteous

19. { And by our holy Sabaoth have I sworn }

Most commentators have transposed the term found in Q1, *Sabaoth*—which is a reference to *Yahweh Sabaoth*, God of Hosts or God's armies—into *Sabbath* (the holy seventh day). Thus, with this change, Shylock is made to say: *And by our holy Sabbath I have sworn*. Such a statement makes little sense in this context. It becomes even more problematic, as Shylock swears upon *our* holy Sabbath (and the commandment of God which demands that a Jew keep the Sabbath holy) in order to break another of God's commandments: "thou shall not kill." Hence, Shylock has sworn himself into a predicament. What this shows, moreover, is Shylock's imperfect brand of Judaism and his foul understanding of his own tradition. Here he is making an oath to the God of the Jews as a device to further his own personal and ungodly aims and impose his corrupt will upon the world. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.35]

20. { To have the due and forfeit of my bond }.

The contract that usurers entered into usually had two parts: a) the amount due, which is the principle of the bond, the amount actually loaned out (plus any interest which accrued), plus b) the forfeit or forfeiture, which is the penalty that must be paid if the amount due is not paid back on time. Usually the forfeit was a person's land or some other great expense. Here the forfeit is one pound of flesh. Present usury laws in most countries render such contracts illegal (especially between individuals). These include loan contracts that carry an exorbitant interest rate and/or a contract that contains a disproportionately high penalty. For instance, the usury rate in New York is 18%, which means that a loan between individuals cannot carry an interest rate higher than 18%. In New Jersey, the rate is 30%. Hence, contracts that charge an interest rate above a state's usury rate is illegal. In most states, the loaning party would lose all rights to collect interest on such a loan; in New York, such a contract being illegal, would be null and void and the borrowing party would not be required to pay back any of the money borrowed

21. / If you deny it, let the consequence | Defame° your charter and your city's freedom  
/ If you deny it, let all doubt alight | Upon the charter that grants your city | It's reputation of fair trade and commerce.

22. { But say it is my humour; it is answered? }

**my humour:** my disposition or nature. This refers to the unchanging bent of one's character or disposition that is determined by the balance of the four main humours or fluids of the body—i.e., blood, phlegm, clear or yellow bile [choler], and dark bile. Blood is associated with the liver (and a lack thereof produces cowardice); phlegm with the lungs / brain; yellow bile with the spleen (producing anger or one who is choleric or splenetic); and dark bile with the gall bladder (producing one who has a gall or cholera). [See 3.5.58, for Launcelot's use of the term].

Shylock's point is that a person cannot give a reason as to why he has a particular dominance of humour (and why he acts in a particular way), as that is simply his nature. Thus, again, with imperfect logic, Shylock is saying that he is really not responsible for his actions, that he cannot change them, that he is prompted by his nature. (This goes against the central Jewish doctrine of man's free choice). [See Additional Notes, 4.1.42]

The term *humour* can also refer to one's whim, one's wish, one's liking—and this is the way that most people would hear this line: 'why do you want the pound of flesh?' Shylock is asked—and he replies: 'it is my humour, it is my whim, it pleases me—and that is my reason.'

Some men are dull and <sup>o</sup> not inclined to eat	/ sluggish,
Even when served a feast of gaping pig. <sup>24</sup>	
Some men <sup>o</sup> go mad if they behold a cat; <sup>25</sup>	/ that
And others, when the bagpipe sings a note, <sup>o</sup>	{sings i'th'nose} / plays a tune
Do wet their pants in fright. <sup>26</sup> And thus one's nature, <sup>o</sup> <sup>27</sup>	{For affection}
Masters of passion, <sup>o</sup> sways it <sup>28</sup> to the mood <sup>o</sup> <sup>29</sup>	/ O'errides our feeling
Of what it <sup>o</sup> likes or loathes. <sup>30</sup> Now, for your answer:	it > our nature
As there is no <sup>o</sup> firm reason to be rendered <sup>o</sup>	/ Just as there's no / given

24. {Some men there are love not a gaping pig}

Refers to someone who is not moved to eat, even when sitting at a feast, where such grand items as a gaping pig—a pig with its mouth held open by an apple—are served. Shylock may be making an oblique reference to himself: he would not eat (i.e., loves not) the feast of the pork which Christians find so desirable.

25. {Some that are mad if they behold a cat} The reference is unclear, but suggests the humor of black bile, which commonly refers to melancholy but also to one beset by haunting dreams and 'vain imaginations.' Thus, the reference here may refer to a person who is mad in terms of false imaginings and superstition with regard to harmless cats.

26. {And others when the bag-pipes sings i'th'nose | Cannot contain their urine;}

**sings i'th'nose:** sings in the nose: a) sings its sad song through its nose (horn), b) sings with a nasal type voice or sound. Bagpipes were known to play mournful tunes. Crying tears (from the eyes) would be the natural response of most men, whereas peeing in one's own pants would not. Here, according to one's humour, Shylock is describing someone overtaken by fear (so much so that he would pee in his pants out of fright). Perhaps the confusion is intentional on the part of the playwright, suggesting that Shylock knows the basic theory of the humours but is confused as to their correct application.

This confusion could be rectified (and Shylock made to appear more apt) by associating the bagpipe with melancholy, rather than fright; thus, by replacing 'urine' with 'weeping,' the reference would be to a person besieged by sadness (and tears) rather than by fright (and urine). Thus, a more cogent reference to the humours would be: 'And others when the bagpipe sings i'th nose | Cannot contain their weeping.'

27. {For affection}

**affection:** a) one's affect; one's disposition, inherent temperament, or b) affections, such as likes and desires. [See 3.1.55: 'Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions;']

28. **it:** one's emotions, feelings, passions, etc.

29. {Masters of passion, sways it to the mood}

**passion:** emotions, feelings, sentiments. Generally refers to the full range of emotional responses a person can have, including but not limited to, passion. The sense here is that one's nature (one's humour or inherent disposition), rules over all his emotions, and sways it (one's emotions) to the mood of how one's nature is so inclined. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.49]

**Masters of passion:** That which rules over our emotions and feelings (passion). 'Masters' could also be seen as a reference to young men, young counterparts of emotions—but this is an unwarranted stretch. Likewise, *Masters of passion* is often emended to read, *Mistress of passion* (Oxford, Norton, Applause, Bevington, Kittredge), suggesting that affection (interpreted as desires) is the cohort of (the mistress of) our emotions (passion). Interpreting 'affection' to mean 'desire' (as opposed to one's natural inclination or disposition) is problematic since such an interpretation makes no meaningful connection to the whole of the passage, which is about man's unchanging nature (or humour). Thus, affection should relate to one's humour or inherent nature, as opposed to the more tenuous interpretation as 'desires.'

The phrase, as it appears in Q1, *Masters of passion*, is problematic and some editors emending it as, *Masters of passion* (Cambridge), or *Masters /oft /passion* (Folger)—neither of which illumine or clarify the meaning of the text. It is likely that the intended passage was simply: 'Masters our passion' which is in keeping with the general idea that our inherent nature or disposition (affection) rules over (masters) our various feelings and emotions (passion).

30. / . . . 'Tis one's own nature | That rules o'er feeling and doth sway our mood | To what it likes or loathes

/ . . . For our own nature, | Ruler of passion, ever sways our mood | To what it likes or loathes.

/ . . . and sways it to move | By what it likes or loathes

/ . . . and affects our mood | To what it likes or loathes

Why one° cannot endure° a gaping pig<sup>31</sup> {he} {abide} / partake  
 Why one° is crazed to see° a harmless cat,<sup>32 33</sup> {he} / fearful of  
 Why one° who hears the playing° of a bagpipe {he} / song / strains / notes  
 Must yield to shame by wetting his own pants,<sup>34</sup>  
 So can I give no reason, more than° to say,° / but {nor I will not}  
 There is° a lodged° hate and a certain loathing<sup>35</sup> {More than} // staunch / long  
 I bear Antonio, that I follow° thus° / pursue // this  
 A losing° suit against him. Are you answered?<sup>36 37</sup> / A gainless // Profitless

—Bassanio

This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,  
 To justify° the current of thy cruelty.<sup>38</sup> / thus excuse

—Shylock

I am not bound to please thee with my answer.

—Bassanio

Do all men kill the things they do not love?

—Shylock

Do men not want to kill the things they hate?<sup>39</sup>

—Bassanio

A first offense cannot bestow° such hatred.<sup>40</sup> / amass / afford / a'bring

— Shylock

What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

—Antonio

31. {Why he cannot abide a gaping pig} / cannot endure / cannot stomach

**abide:** tolerate, bear, be unaffected by, stand the sight of

32. / Why he is superstitious of a cat See Note 18 xx.

33. {Why he a harmless, necessary cat}

**necessary:** useful, needed to perform the function of catching mice

**harmless:** refers to an ordinary house cat, as opposed to a 'harmful' cat, as might be employed by a witch

34. {Must yield to such inevitable shame | As to offend, himself being offended,}

/ Is forced to bear the shame of wetting his | Own pants, offending others as himself.

35. / There is a long-standing hate and loathing

36. {More than a lodged hatred and a certain loathing | I bear Antonio, that I follow thus | A losing suit against him. Are you answered?}

**losing suit:** an unprofitable action where Shylock gains a worthless pound of flesh as as opposed to the usual monetary gain.

37. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.62]

38. / To excuse thy overflowing° cruelty / over-bounding

/ But mere excuse for thy vengeful cruelty° / boundless / flooding / avid / ardent

39. {Hates any man the thing he would not kill?}

/ Every man kills the thing that would kill him.° / he does hate.

40. {Every offence is not a hate at first} / How can there be such hatred from one offence?

I pray you, think,<sup>o</sup> you argue with a stone.<sup>o</sup> 41 / Remind yourself {the Jew} / a block  
 You may as well<sup>42</sup> go stand<sup>o</sup> upon the beach / alight  
 And bid the tide<sup>o</sup> to bate its usual height; 43 {main flood}  
 You may as well use question<sup>o</sup> with the wolf<sup>o</sup> / long argue  
 Why he hath killed the baby lamb with jaws. 44  
 You may as well forbid the mountain pines  
 To wag their high tops and to make no noise  
 When they are fretted with the gusts<sup>o</sup> of heaven; / winds  
 You may as well do anything most hard  
 As seek to soften<sup>o</sup> that which none is harder— 45 / To try an' soften  
 His godless<sup>o</sup> heart.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, I do beseech you, 47 / faithless / vengeful  
 Make no more offers, use no further means,  
 But with all brief<sup>o</sup> and plain efficiency<sup>o</sup> / speed {conveniency}  
 Let me have judgment and the Jew his will. 48

—Bassanio [*to Shylock*]

For thy three thousand ducats, here is six.

—Shylock

If every ducat in six thousand ducats  
 Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,  
 I would not draw<sup>o</sup> them. I would have my bond. 49 / take

—Duke

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend'ring<sup>o</sup> none? / giving

41. {I pray you think, you question with the Jew}

**the Jew:** refers specifically to Shylock, and not to Jews in general, else Antonio would have said, 'you question with a Jew.'

42. **You may as well:** Antonio repeats this phrase four times.

43. / And bid the tide to lower its usual height / And bid the high tide not rise with the moon. / And bid the tide abate its rising waters.

44. {Why he hath made the ewe bleake for the lamb}

**bleat:** cry loudly. Q1 has *bleake*, which is likely an error for *bleat*.

45. {As seel to soften that—than which what's harder?—}

/ To try and soften that which is hardest—

/ To try and soften the hardest thing of all—

46. {His Jewish heart.} / His vacant heart / vacuous heart / faithless heart. / His merciless heart. Thus

This line is somewhat out of place for Antonio, as his contention with Shylock has been over usury, yet here is a direct attack against Shylock's Jewishness. Under the circumstances, where Antonio is about to be killed by this unforgiving enemy, such a slur is not out of place, and may reveal what Antonio believes to the 'thick-necked' and unflinching aspect of Shylock's character. An normal usurer, having been offered three times the principle owed, would have taken the offer. Thus, there is something more than mere usurious greed which is entrenching Shylock in the 'unprofitable course.' Antonio, unable to fathom Shylock's alien course of action, is here linking it to his Jewishness, since Antonio can find nothing else.

47. / His unforgiving heart. Thus, I beseech you

48. {But with all brief and plain expediency} / But with all plain and efficient dispatch

49. Shylock is saying that he would refuse an offer of 36,000 ducats. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.86]

—Shylock

What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?<sup>50</sup>

You have among you<sup>o</sup> many a purchased slave<sup>51</sup> / acquired

Which like your donkeys<sup>o</sup> and your dogs and mules {asses}

You use in abject<sup>o</sup> and in slavish roles<sup>o52</sup> / lowly {parts} / tasks/ chores / functions

Because you bought them. Shall I say to you:

‘Let them be free. Marry them to your heirs.

Why sweat them under burdens?<sup>o</sup> Let their beds {burthens}

Be made as soft as yours and let their palates<sup>o</sup> / mouths / meals

Be seasoned with your spices.’<sup>o</sup> You will answer: {viands}

‘The slaves are ours.’ So do I answer you:<sup>53</sup>

The pound of flesh which I demand of him

Is dearly bought. ‘Tis mine, and I will have it.

If you deny me, fie upon your law!

There is no force in the decrees of Venice.<sup>54</sup>

I stand<sup>o</sup> for judgment.<sup>o</sup> Answer—shall I have it? / wait // justice

—Duke

Upon my power I may dismiss this court,<sup>o</sup><sup>55</sup> / case

Unless Bellario, a learned judge,<sup>o</sup> {a learned doctor} / a doctor of law

Whom I have sent for to determine this,<sup>56</sup>

Come here today.<sup>57</sup>

---

50. / What fate should I dread, having done no wrong? / For what mercy should I hope, doing no wrong? / Why hope for mercy, having done no wrong?

Here is the blunder of Shylock’s position—he is doing a great wrong. He is holding to the letter of the law to justify his doing something he knows (by his own conscience and the laws of Judaism) to be wrong. Hence, it is Shylock’s own feeble consciousness (or greed-infested anger) which does not allow him to understand the truth of the law—and this is his undoing. His position is untruthful in every respect and violates the spirit of every law: thus he tries to empower himself by cleaving to the strict letter of the Venetian law—for his own selfish gain—as opposed to upholding the law of human righteousness. Thus, by his own lack of truth, he is undone.

51. / Many among you have a purchased slave,

52. / You burden with despised and slavish means

53. / Be seasoned with the same viands.’ Your answer

Shall be: ‘The slaves belong to us; <we have

Purchased them.’> So, I answer you the same:

54. / There is no power in the laws of Venice.

55. {Upon my power I may dismiss this court}

**upon my power:** by virtue of my power, in accord with my power (as Duke)

**I may dismiss:** a) dismiss the case entirely, b) adjourn the case until such time as Bellario appears. The legal proceedings of the play correspond to neither Venetian nor English law of the time.

The Duke states that he has the power to dismiss this case, contrary to the assertions made that the Duke does not have that power, and must follow the strict letter of the law (and thereby honor the contract) [Antonio: 3.4.26-31; Portia: 4.1.215-219]. One of the earliest cases in US law involved individual rights, and it was ruled that the state could not nullify a contract made between individuals—if it did have that power the (as stated in Chief Justice Marshall’s opinion) the very institution and fabric of the economic livelihood of the country would be undermined. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.103]

56. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.105]

57. There is a causality implied here: “I, the Duke, have the power to dismiss this case, *unless* Bellario comes to determine it.” Hence, if Bellario does not come, the Duke may dismiss the case. Thus, Portia’s arrival on behalf of Bellario—and with Bellario’s glowing recommendation—is the very thing that stalls the Duke and prevents him from dismissing the case. Had Bellario or his emissary not appeared, what would have happened? Would the case have been dismissed? Thus, Portia’s arrival to rule over the proceedings has unwittingly put Antonio’s life in new jeopardy. As such, it becomes increasingly clear that Portia was fully versed in the law and was well aware that she could save Antonio before she dared such a bold intervention.

—Salerio                    My lord, here stays<sup>o</sup> without<sup>58</sup>                    / there waits  
A messenger with letters from the judge,<sup>o</sup>                    { doctor}  
New<sup>o</sup> come from Padua.                    / Just

—Duke  
Bring us<sup>o</sup> the letters! Call the messenger!                    / me

*Exit Salerio*

—Bassanio  
Good cheer, Antonio! What man, courage yet.<sup>59</sup>  
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,  
Ere thou shall lose for me one drop of blood.

—Antonio  
I am a feeble creature<sup>o</sup> of the flock,                    { tainted wether}<sup>60</sup> / tainted servant  
Meetest<sup>o</sup> for death. The weakest kind of fruit                    / Most fit  
Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me.  
Hear now Bassanio, you are best employed  
To live that you may write<sup>o</sup> my epitaph.<sup>61</sup>                    / To stay alive and write

*Enter Salerio with Nerissa, dressed as a lawyer's clerk*

—Duke  
Come you from Padua, from Bellario?

—Nerissa  
From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace.

*She hands him a letter*  
*Shylock sharpens his knife on the sole of his shoe*

—Bassanio [*to Shylock*]  
Why dost thou whet<sup>o</sup> thy knife so earnestly?                    > sharpen

—Shylock  
To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt<sup>o</sup> there.                    { bankrupt}

—Gratziano  
Not on thy sole,<sup>62</sup> but on thy soul, harsh Jew,

---

58. / My Lord, there's waiting outside / My Lord, remains outside

59. / Hold fast man, have courage!

60. **wether**: weak or castrated ram. From *bellwether*: a ram with a bell hung round its neck

61. { You cannot be better employed, Bassanio, | Than to live still and write mine epitaph. }

62. **sole**: Shylock whets his knife on the sole of his shoe or boot

Thou mak'st thy knife keen.<sup>63</sup> But no metal can—  
No, not the hoodman's axe°—bear half the keenness  
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce° thee?

{hangman's axe}<sup>64</sup>  
/ reach

—Shylock

No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

—Gratziano

O, be thou damned, inexecrable ° dog!  
And for thy life let justice be accused!  
Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,  
To° hold the same opinion as the Greeks<sup>65</sup>  
That souls of animals infuse° themselves  
Into the trunks of men. Thy beastly° spirit  
Governed° a wolf who hanged for human slaughter;<sup>66</sup>  
Then° from the gallows did his° fell soul flee,<sup>67</sup>  
And whilst thou lay in thy unhallowed womb,°  
Infused itself in thee, for thy desires  
Are wolvis, blood-thirsty,° and ravenous.<sup>68 69</sup>

/ thou ever-cursèd  
/ sight  
/ And  
/ instill / install  
{currish}/ brutal  
/ Lived in // killing humans  
{Even}/ Thus / its  
{dam}  
  
{bloody, starved}

—Shylock

Till thou canst rail° the seal from off my bond  
Thou but offend'st° thy lungs to speak so loud.°  
Repair<sup>70</sup> thy wit, good youth,° or it will fall  
To cureless° ruin. I stand here for law.

> remove  
/ only harm // with all thy shouting  
/ young man  
/ hopeless

—Duke

This letter from Ballario doth commend°

> recommend

---

63. / Thou makest keen thy knife. No metal can

64. **hangman's axe:** executioner's axe. Here the term *hangman's* is begrudgingly emended with *hoodman's* or *hooded man's*, to clarify the reference to an executioner (who is usually hooded) and who employs a sharp axe, rather than to a hangman, who is more likely to be associated with a rope rather than an axe. In an alternative rendering the more precise term, *executioner*—though long-winded—could be used: 'No, not the executioner's sharpest axe | Bear half the keenness of thy sharp envy. | Can nothing get through? Can no prayer piece thee?'

/ Not even that of a head-chopper's axe / Not even the fell axe of a hoodman

65. {To hold the opinion with Pythagoras} / To hold a common tenet with the Greeks / To share the same belief as ancient Greeks.

Gratziano is referring to the Pythagorean doctrine regarding reincarnation and the transmigration of souls (where an animal soul could incarnate in a human body), which is heresy to Christians.

66. {Governed a wolf, who hanged for human slaughter}

67. {did his fell soul flee}

**fell:** deadly, cruel, savage

**flee:** pass on, leave (flee) the body

68. / Inhabited a wolf who was but hanged  
For human slaughter. Then,° from the gallows,  
His deadly soul did flee and thus infused

Itself in thee whilst thou lay in thy mother's

Vile and unholy womb; for thy desires

Are wolvis, blood-thirsty,° and ravenous.

/ Unhallowed womb; for all thy desires

69. [See Additional Notes: 4.1.137]

70. **repair:** use to good end, put to good use, rectify, set in order

A young and learnèd scholar<sup>o</sup> to our court.  
Where is he?

{doctor} / lawyer

—Nerissa He attendeth here, nearby<sup>o</sup> 71  
To know your answer, whether you'll admit<sup>o</sup> him.

/ He is waiting here  
/ receive

—Duke  
With all my heart. Some three or four of you,  
Go give him courteous escort<sup>o</sup> to this place. 72

{conduct} / passage

*Exeunt three or four*

Meanwhile,<sup>o</sup> the court shall hear Bellario's letter:

{Meantime} > In the meantime

73

'Your Grace shall understand, that at the receipt of your letter I was very ill<sup>o</sup> but at the instant that your messenger came, a young doctor of law from Rome, named Balthazar, was paying me a kindly visit. 74 I acquainted him with the case<sup>o</sup> in controversy between the Jew and Antonio, the merchant. We turned o'er many books together. He is furnished with my opinion 75 which is bettered with his own learning—the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend. Thus, in response to your grace's request, I have importuned him to rule on this matter in my stead. 76 I beseech you, let his lack of years not bring a lack in your revered estimation of him, for I've never known so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose conduct<sup>o</sup> shall, better than my words, disclose<sup>o</sup> his worthiness. 77 78

*Enter Portia as Balthazar, Doctor of Law, with others*

You hear the learned Bellario, what he writes?  
And here, I take it, is the doctor come.<sup>o</sup>

/ comes the young doctor

---

71. {He attendeth here hard by} / He doth eagerly await / He is eagerly awaiting

72. / With courteous intent, go bring him here.

73. Q1 offers no stage direction here; and since no character is designated to read the letter, most productions simply have the Duke read it. This is certainly acceptable, however, it may be more dramatically apt to have a court official read the letter (which could be Salerio). Had the Duke said, 'Meantime, I will read Bellario's letter' the direction for him to read would be clear.

74. {in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthazar} In the original, no visitation was made between Portia and Bellario: Portia's servant was sent to Bellario, who fetched clothes and books, and who then gave them to Portia at the port where the ferry traveled to Venice. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.151]

75. This indicates that Bellario reviewed the matter and furnished Portia with his opinion—as opposed to simply supplying her with the books.

76. [See Additional Note, 4.1.159]

77. {I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.}

78. **I was very ill:** {I am very sick}

**arrived:** {came}

**the case:** {the cause} / matter

**whose conduct:** {whose trial} / evidence of his judgement / your test of him

**disclose:** {publish} / make known / reveal

**worthiness:** {commendation}

Give me your hand. Come you from old Bellario?

—Portia

I did<sup>o</sup> my lord.

/ I do / I have

—Duke            You are welcome. Take your place.

Are you acquainted with the grave dispute<sup>o</sup>

{ difference } / disagreement

That holds this present question<sup>o</sup> in the court? <sup>79</sup>

/ matter / issue

—Portia

I am informed thoroughly of the case.<sup>o</sup> <sup>80</sup>

/ informed with respect to the cause

Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew? <sup>81</sup>

—Duke

Antonio and old Shylock, both step forward.<sup>o</sup> <sup>82</sup>

{ stand forth }.

—Portia

Is your name Shylock?

—Shylock

Shylock is my name.

—Portia

Of a strange nature is the suit you follow

Yet in such ruling,<sup>o</sup> the Venetian law

/ matters

Cannot impugn<sup>o</sup> you as you do proceed. <sup>84</sup>

/ oppose

[to Antonio]

---

79. / That occupies the question now in court?

80. Portia, being well-informed as to the present matter (and the law governing it), suggests that she met with Bellario, rather than thoroughly educating herself in all nuance of Venetian law. Yet, such a meeting is not indicated in the original. Two possibilities thus exist: a) that Balthazar reviewed the matter and took the time to write out an opinion for Portia, along with his letter of recommendation to the Duke, or b) Portia changed her plans midstream and decided it would be best to visit Balthazar in person, in Padua.

81. Although Portia is likely to know which is Antonio and which is Shylock—through a difference in appearance and dress—with this opening question she demonstrates the true impartial qualities of a judge and makes it known that she is entering into the case without any assumptions, prejudices, or preconceptions. Questioning even that which is most obvious testifies to her impartiality. In some productions the courtroom is crowded and she has reason to ask this question. In other productions the difference in appearance between Antonio and Shylock is not so obvious; or the difference is obvious and Portia, already knowing the answer, still asks the question. In some productions, Shylock gives a mocking glance at Portia when she asks this question whose answer is obvious.

82. It is possible, that this could be read as part of a stage direction, rather than a directive from the Duke. It also may shed some light on Portia's question: "Which is the merchant here, and which is the Jew?" If the two were already standing forward, alone, she may not ask this question as the answer was obvious. However, if Shylock were among his people, and Antonio among his people, she would not know which was the merchant and which was the Jew. They would both have to step forward in order for her to know which was the Jew, in question, and which was the merchant, in question.

84. / Cannot oppose the course you choose to follow

In terms of reasoning, what possible interest could Portia have in preserving Venetian law over the life of her husband's dear friend? And why did she intervene in the first place?—to uphold Venetian law or bend the law to save Antonio? Surely, at this point, her best course would be to seek to have the case dismissed, or call on the Duke to dismiss it (as he stated he had the power to do). Her defense of the Venetian law—which bodes ill against Antonio's position—must be seen as part of her overall stratagem. Portia to play this card we must assume that she is in total control of the case (and its outcome) from the onset. In other words, she is well aware of the law by which she can stop Shylock, at any time, if he is not willing to drop the case against Antonio.

You stand within his danger,<sup>85</sup> do you not?

—Antonio  
Ay, so he says.

—Portia        Do you confess the bond?

—Antonio  
I do.

—Portia    Then must the Jew be merciful.

—Shylock  
On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

—Portia  
The quality of mercy is not strained<sup>o</sup> <sup>86</sup> / can't be forced > can't be compelled  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven { the place beneath }  
Upon the earth below.<sup>o</sup> It is twice blessed: / one // him who gives and who receives  
It blesseth him<sup>o</sup> who gives and him who gets.<sup>o87</sup> / given  
'Tis mightiest when rendered<sup>o</sup> by the mighty <sup>88 89</sup> / becomes } / honors/ tributes > is becoming of  
<Upon the<sup>o</sup> weak and helpless.><sup>90</sup> It enobles<sup>o</sup>  
The thronèd monarch better than his crown. <sup>91</sup>  
His scepter shows the force of temporal <sup>92</sup> power,

---

85. **within his danger:** within his power to harm you; within the reaches of his bond and the danger of its consequence; within harm's way.

86. **strained:** forced, compelled. Shylock asks "On what compulsion must I be merciful?" and Portia answers this by saying that the quality of mercy is not something that must be compelled, or forced, but something that comes as a natural expression of the heart. It dropeth like rain; it does not have to be 'squeezed' out of a person.

/ The quality of our mercy is such | That it cannot be forced. It drops as heaven's | Gentle rain, falling 'pon the earth below. | Thus, it is twice blessed.

87. {It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.} / Blessing the one who gives and who receives

**that takes:** the imagery of *him that takes* is somewhat inferior to that *him who receives*, as the former suggest a willful action rather than a passive reception. *Taking* thus implies the acquisition of some benefit which comes from personal action (without the need of a giver), whereas *receiving* implies a benefit bestowed by a giver. One need not take rain, it falls from the sky freely—all one need do is receive it.

88. / 'Tis mightiest in the mighty, when rendered

89. Here Portia is telling Shylock that mercy is *mightiest in the mighty*—a lesson which is irrelevant to Shylock's station as a dehumanized Jew; yet perhaps she hopes this speech will resonate with Shylock because, at this moment, he has total power over A

90. <To those who're helpless<sup>o</sup> and weak.> / powerless

91. {It becomes | the throned monarch better than his crown.}

<To those who're weak and helpless.> Thus, a monarch  
It makes more worthy of a kingdom's rule<sup>o</sup> / to rule a kingdom  
Than all the power vested by his crown.

92. **temporal:** worldly, material, assigned; temporary and passing

Portia is suggesting that the king's power is temporal, whereas the quality of mercy, which reflects God's attributes, is ever-lasting—it is *above this sceptered sway*. "By the greatest fate a powerful king may rule the earth for a hundred years; but through the power of love, he may rule the earth forever." (Adopted from the Tao Te Ching)

The attribute to <sup>o</sup> awe and majesty <sup>93</sup>	/ That which commandeth
Wherein doth sit <sup>o</sup> the dread and fear of kings. <sup>94</sup>	/ Which brings about
But mercy is above this scepter'd sway.	
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,	
It is an attribute of <sup>o</sup> God himself.	{to}
And earthly power shares kinship with God <sup>o</sup> <sup>95</sup>	/ is akin to God
When mercy tempers <sup>o</sup> justice. <sup>96</sup> Therefore, Jew, <sup>o</sup> <sup>97</sup>	{seasons} placates
Though justice be thy plea, consider this:	
That in the course of justice none of us	
Should <sup>o</sup> see <sup>o</sup> salvation. <sup>98</sup> We do pray for mercy, <sup>99</sup>	/Would // see / find
And that same prayer <sup>100</sup> doth teach us all to render	
The deeds of mercy. <sup>101 102</sup> I have spoken thus	
To mitigate thy rig'rous <sup>o</sup> plea <sup>103</sup> for justice, <sup>104</sup>	/ froward / headstrong / wilful
Which, if thou follow, this strict <sup>105</sup> court of Venice	
Must needs give sentence 'gainst <sup>o</sup> the merchant there.	/ rule against

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93. **attribute to:** a) the claim or entitlement to; b) having the attributes, quality, or character of  
 / The given claim<sup>o</sup> to awe and majesty, / The sanctioned rights  
 / That which confers to him reverence and awe /

94. / Wherein he rules the state with fear and dread / Whereby the people are governed by fear

95. {And earthly power doth then show likest God's}

96. / And earthly power holds (/shows) the most kinship

With God's, when justice is balanced (/seasoned) with mercy.

97. {And earthly power doth then show likest God's | When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,}

The use of the term 'Jew,' in this instance, is somewhat amiss—along with the entire appeal, which involves sentiments relating to kingly power, awe, and majesty rather than a Jew who only feels oppression (at the hands of more powerful Christians). Portia, however, is addressing the position of power which Shylock now hold over Antonio (likening it to the power which a king has over his subjects) and, at the same time, she is revealing the poverty of that power (which a king gets by virtue of his crown and which Shylock has obtained through the legal backing of his bond) when compared to a position in kinship with God, a position of mercy.

98. This is an oblique reference to the doctrine of original sin and the notion that it is impossible to attain salvation through one's work alone (i.e. without the grace of God).

99. *We* in this regard refers to Christians (who recite the Lord's Prayer) and not to Jews. Though her words are directed to Shylock, the heart of her appeal resonates with her Christian audience and the sentiments to which they can relate. Since she has no knowledge of Jews, she must assume that they are like Christians in both manner, sentiment, and religious bent.

100. {And that same prayer}

This is an overt reference to the Lord's Prayer. In the previous line Portia says, *we do pray for mercy* but the 'we' refers to those Christians who recite the Lord's Prayer—not Jews. Again, Portia's plea is made from the vantage of her own world and not from that of Shylock's. Thus, by citing her all-inclusive Christian stance she is unwittingly dismissing the value and relevance of Shylock and his non-Christian worldview.

101. *The Lord's Prayer:* "Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

102. Some commentators have claimed that Portia's plea also has a 'Hebrew resonance' and that some likeness can be found in Psalm 143.2 and Eccles. 28.2 ('Forgive thy neighbor the hurt that he hath done thee, so shall thy sins be forgiven thee also, when thou pray.'). This, however, is an *ex post facto* stretch. Neither of these passages refer to prayers that are known or recited by Jews. Shylock, moreover, holds himself to be sinless (and not in need of forgiveness) and so neither passage would register with him. In addition, most Hebrew interpretations—including that of the very famous passage, 'love thy neighbor as thyself'—hold the term *neighbor* to mean one's Jewish neighbor. Thus the edict to 'forgive thy neighbor' would not apply to Antonio, a Christian.

103. / staunch appeal / stern appeal

104. {To mitigate the justice of thy plea}

105. **strict:** bound, inflexible, rigid (in that it is bound to follow the letter of the law)

—Shylock

My deeds upon my head!<sup>106</sup> I crave° the law,°  
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.<sup>107 108</sup>

/ seek // demand justice

⟨optional dialogue⟩<sup>109</sup>

—Portia

Is he not able to discharge the money?

—Bassanio

Yes, here I tender° it for him in the court

/ have / offer

Yea, thrice° the sum. If that will not suffice,

{twice}<sup>110</sup>

I will be bound to pay it ten times over,°

/ more

And put as bond° my hands, my head, my heart.

{On forfeit of}

If this will not suffice, it must appear °

/ be such

That malice outweighs° truth.<sup>111</sup> And I beseech you,<sup>112</sup>

{bears down} / conquers / trumps the

Bend° once the law to your authority.

{Wrest} / Sway

To do a great right, do a little wrong

And curb° this cruel devil of his will.<sup>113 114</sup>

/ thwart / bar

---

106. **My deeds upon my head!:** Let my own deeds be upon my head; let me bear the consequence (or divine retribution) of my own deeds (which I need not fear because I am blameless). Not true. Shylock mistakenly believes his action to be sinless (because, in his mind, he is following some law); thus he need not fear retribution nor seek mercy (which pertains to someone who has sinned). Portia says that mercy falls like gentle rain from heaven: here Shylock is dismissing her plea and says, 'I don't care about heaven's mercy falling upon me like rain, let my own deeds fall upon my head.' Shylock, blinded by hatred, and strictly devoted to the letter of the written law, is unable to see the divine discord of his own actions. Rather than craving that which God desires, Shylock craves the law which will grant him the unjust penalty and forfeit of his bond.

107. **the penalty and forfeit of my bond** > that part of the bond (above and beyond the principal and interest) which is due if the full sums borrowed are not paid back in time. In this case, the penalty Shylock is demanding—which is owed according to the terms of the bond—is a pound of Antonio's flesh.

108. / Let my own deeds now fall upon my head! | I crave the law, the forfeit of my bond.

109. To reiterate the reason for Shylock's rage against Antonio, the following lines could be added:

Additional lines (A):

*Shy:* Here, now, we see the face of good Antonio,

Yes good, but good to whom? Not me. Not mine. / Showing his virtue like a stained-glass window;

For I have only felt the broken shards

Of his abuse, his cruelty ripped upon

My humanness and rend my good standing

Additional lines (B):

*Shy:* How is a man to feel when he is treated

With malice and contempt? With years of insult?

With spitting, cursing, torment, and abuse—

As this man, lacking goodness, treated me?

Is there no law in your book against that?

*Por:* [looking in book] Not in this book.

*Shy:* Then where is it written—

In a same place where one can find your mercy?

110. Later in the scene [224, 231] Portia states that an offer of *thrice* the sum has been made, whereas here, in Q1 [207]

Bassanio only offers *twice* the sum. Either Portia is mistaken in her recall, she intentionally ups the offer, or Bassanio offered *thrice* the sum (and *twice* is a typo). The discrepancy is rectified by having Bassanio offer *thrice* the sum and Portia referring to this same amount.

111. {malice bears down truth} 'Malice oppresses honesty' (Johnson)

**bears down:** overwhelms, overthrows, oppresses, defeats; weighs more than, is more important than

**truth:** 'reason,' 'honesty,' 'righteousness,' 'rule of equity,' etc.

112. / That malice overthrows° truth. I beseech you

/ vanquishes / overwhelms / overturns

113. / And curb this devil of his hellish will

114. / This time alone, by your authority, | Wrest once the reigns of law: for a great right | Do but a little wrong, and curb this devil | From the cruel execution of his will.

—Portia

It must not<sup>o</sup> be. There is no power in Venice  
That can alter<sup>o</sup> an established decree.<sup>115</sup>  
'Twill be recorded as<sup>o</sup> a precedent,  
And many an error,<sup>o</sup> by the same example,<sup>o</sup>  
Will rush into the state. It cannot be.<sup>o</sup> <sup>116</sup>

/ cannot  
/ reverse / turn back / o'erturn  
/ 'Twill then be counted  
/ many errors // as herein applied  
/ must not

—Shylock

A Daniel come to judgment, yea, a Daniel!  
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!

—Portia

I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

—Shylock [*eagerly handing it over*]

Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.

—Portia [*accepting the document but not yet reading it*]

Shylock,<sup>117</sup> there's thrice the money offered thee.<sup>118</sup>

—Shylock

An oath, an oath. I have<sup>o</sup> an oath in<sup>o</sup> heaven!<sup>119</sup>  
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?—  
No, not for Venice.

/ I've made

—Portia [*looking over the bond*] Why,<sup>o</sup> this bond is forfeit,  
And lawfully, by this, the Jew may claim

/ Yes

---

115. {Can alter a decree established}

116. Such a defense of Venetian law—over the direct concerns of her husband, and also over what is morally right, merciful, and fair—is amiss. Why is Portia (who took so many measures to impersonate a doctor of law and intervene on behalf of Antonio) now taking pains to preserve precedent in Venetian law? What is she offering here that a normal Venetian judge could not offer?— if not a straight-forward reading of the law. We must assume, by this strange course, that Portia is 'playing' this hand to the end, and that even before entering the court she was aware of holding a trump card, and being able to stopping Shylock at any time. See footnote for line 176. [See Additional Note, 4.1.219]

117. **Shylock:** Portia is still calling him by first name.

118. **thrice:** In Q1, Bassanio offers *twice* the sum [207]. This amount was emended to read *thrice* the sum, in order to align it with Portia's statement: *Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee.* [224] If Bassanio only offered *twice* the sum then here, it seems, that Portia is upping the ante, as Shylock has already refused twice the sum. If she offered the same sum, already refused, it would not be as effective a plea as offering a higher amount. It is possible, as some have speculated, that either Shakespeare (or Portia) forgot that twice was offered, and herein stated *thrice*, in error (with no objection from Bassanio). More likely, the error slipped in as a result of a copyist's error.

119. To remind the audience that Shylock's oath refers to exacting the forfeit of his bond—a reminder which no mature audience would need—the following line, could be added: (I swore to have the forfeit of my bond.)

A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off  
Nearest the merchant's heart. [*to Shylock*] Be merciful,  
Take thrice thy money. Bid me tear the bond.

—Shylock

When it is paid according to the tenor.<sup>o</sup> {tenure} / terms  
It doth appear you are a worthy judge;  
You know the law, your most learned opinion<sup>o</sup> {exposition} / interpretation  
Has been most sound. I charge you by the law,  
Whereof<sup>o</sup> you are a well-deserving<sup>o</sup> pillar, /Of which // unwavering / unfaltering  
Proceed to judgment. By my soul I swear  
There is no power in the tongue of man <sup>120</sup>  
To alter me. I stay here on<sup>o</sup> my bond. / stand fast to

—Antonio

Most heartily, do I beseech the court  
To give the judgment.

—Portia                      Why then, thus it is:  
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

—Shylock

O noble judge! O excellent young man!

*<The Duke bids Portia to approach him; they talk aside.>* <sup>121</sup>

—Portia <sup>122</sup>

For the intent and purpose of the law  
Grants<sup>o</sup> full enforcement of<sup>o</sup> the forfeiture<sup>o</sup> <sup>123</sup> / Gives / Bears // penalty  
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

—Shylock

'Tis very true, O wise and upright<sup>o</sup> judge! righteous  
How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

---

120. However, as we soon discover, there is power in the tongue of a woman!

121. There is a break in rhythm here [line 243], which could suggest some type of staged action and a pause in the dialogue. In this exchange between Portia and Shylock the next three lines [244-46] are essentially vacuous and a bland recap of what we've already heard, again suggesting a possible break in the dialogue. Or it could be that Portia is repeating words while she is thinking about something she had just discussed with the Duke.

In a likely staging, the Duke could call Portia over after line 243. The unheard conversation between Portia and the Duke might suggest that the Duke is not convinced about Portia's course of action. Thus we could infer that Portia is reassuring the Duke (perhaps with a subtle hand motion) that she is in total control and that she has no intention of letting Shylock carry out the deed as he intends. Thus, after her conversation with the Duke, Portia returns and repeats what has already been stated (with lines 244-46) as a way to regain her bearings and continue the conversation where she left off. A second aside between the Duke and Portia could also be called after line 301 (where Shylock says, 'Come, prepare!') suggesting that the Duke feels this has gone on far enough, and that now he wants closure.

122. As stated in the previous note, the following five lines are somewhat repetitive and could be deleted.

123. {Hath full relation to the penalty}

/ Fully supports the given penalty / Gives full upholding to the penalty / Deems to fulfill the terms of penalty

—Portia [*to Antonio*]

Therefore, lay bare your bosom.

—Shylock Ah, his breast.

So says the bond; doth it not, noble judge?

‘Nearest his heart’—those are the very words.

—Portia

‘Tis so. Are scales<sup>o</sup> here to weigh the flesh? {balance}

—Shylock [*opening a bag to reveal them*]

I have them ready. ⟨They are in my bag.⟩

—Portia

Have you<sup>o</sup> a surgeon, Shylock,<sup>124</sup> on your charge,<sup>o125</sup> / Is there // hired / paid for by you  
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death?

—Shylock [*looks at the bond*]

Is it so nominated in<sup>o</sup> the bond?<sup>126</sup> / specified within

—Portia

It is not so expressed, but what of that<sup>o</sup>? / it  
‘Twere good you do so much out of compassion<sup>o</sup> 127 128 {for charity}

—Shylock

I cannot find it; ‘tis not in the bond.<sup>129</sup>

—Portia

You, merchant,<sup>130</sup> have you anything to say?

---

124. The calling of Shylock by his name, as opposed to ‘Jew,’ at this stage in the game is somewhat telling. Portia is still appealing to him on a personal level, giving him yet another opportunity to veer from his intended course and show mercy—though at this point, by all accounts, she is now disgusted with Shylock’s intransigent and unmerciful position.

125. {Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge.}

**have by:** have you come by; have you hired

/ And have you, Shylock, paid for a surgeon / And have you, Shylock, here employed a surgeon?

/ Have you employed a surgeon, on your charge / Have you a surgeon, hired at your expense?

126. / Is that condition listed in the bond? / Is that mentioned in the terms of the bond? / Is that specified in the written bond?

127. / It is an act of charity and goodness. / It is a righteous action of compassion.

128. Portia, seeing the futility of trying to reason with Shylock—and his showing not one iota of compassion or mercy—now shifts her position and seeks to actuate her course of action against Shylock. She has given him every chance to be merciful and charitable—actions that are in line with higher principles—all of which he refused.

129. Here there is a shift in Portia’s attitude towards Shylock; rather than continuing to address him (and continuing to argue with him) she shifts her attention and focus away from him. Perhaps her sensitivity now gives in to disgust at what appears to a singular lack of charity and humanity—a sentiment rather alien and abhorrent to Portia. See previous note.

130. Portia calls Shylock by name on many occasions, but herein refers to Antonio impersonally as, ‘you, merchant.’ After the turning point [259]—when Portia gives up all hope to try and dissuade Shylock from his inhumane course—she never again refers to him by name, but only as the ‘Jew.’ During the trial, Portia refers to Antonio as ‘the merchant,’ [260, 296]; after Shylock is thwarted, she calls him by his proper name [369, 374].

—Antonio

But little. I am braced<sup>o</sup> and well-prepared {armed} / ready  
Give me your hand Bassanio, fare you well.  
Grieve not that I am fall'n to this for you,  
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind  
Than is her custom: it is still her way<sup>o</sup> {use}  
To let the wretched<sup>o</sup> man outlive his wealth, / des'late  
To view with hollow<sup>o</sup> eye and wrinkled brow / sunken  
His final years of pain and<sup>o</sup> poverty— / painful  
But from the misery of this ling'ring penance  
Doth she, <with bitter<sup>o</sup> kindness,> now release me.<sup>131 132</sup> / loving  
Commend me to you honourable wife. / Speak well of me unto your honored wife  
Tell her the story<sup>o</sup> of Antonio's end. {process}  
Say how I loved you, even at my death.<sup>o</sup> {speak me fair in death}  
And when the tale is told, bid her be judge  
Whether Bassanio had not once been loved.<sup>o134</sup> {a love}  
Regret but you<sup>o</sup> that you shall lose your friend; {Repent} // Regret one thing—<sup>135</sup>  
And he regrets<sup>o</sup> not that he pays your debt: {repents}  
For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,  
I'll pay it instantly<sup>o</sup> with all my heart.<sup>o 136</sup> / mine own life

—Bassanio

Antonio, I am married to a wife  
Who<sup>o</sup> is as dear to me as life itself; {Which}  
But life itself, my wife, and all the world  
Are not with me more dear than is<sup>o</sup> thy life.<sup>137</sup> {esteemed above}  
I would give<sup>o</sup> all, ay, sacrifice them all, {lose}  
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

—Portia [*aside*]

Your wife would give you little thanks for that,  
If she were by<sup>o</sup> to hear you make the offer. / Were she nearby

---

131. / I am, by Fortune's kindness, now released. / I am, by her sweet kindness so delivered.

132. To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow . . .

{An age of poverty—from which ling'ring penance | Of such misery doth she cut me off.}

a) / An age of poverty—and now she saves | Me from the ling'ring penance of such misery.

b) / Long years of aging pain and poverty | The misery from which I am now released.

c) / Long years of poverty, the ling'ring penance | Of which she now so kindly cuts from me.

d) / His final years of pain and poverty: | 'Tis from the misery of this lingering | Penance, which I am so kindly released. (/delivered).

134. {Whether Bassanio had not once a love}

**love:** a dear friend, friend who loved him

/ Whether Bassanio was not truly loved. / Whether or not Bassanio had been loved.

135. / Have one regret— / Hold one regret— / Regret alone

136. **with all my heart:** wholeheartedly; with total embrace; implies something done with total love and willingness. Here Antonio is saying, 'I'll pay your debts most willingly, without regret, with love, and wholeheartedly.'

/ I will most willingly give up my life / I will—with all my heart—give up my life

137. {Are not with me esteemed above thy life}

/ Are not with me more dear than is thy life. / Are not so dear to me as is thy life / I do not hold more dearly than thy life

—Gratziano

I have a wife whom, I declare,° I love. {protest}  
I wish° she were in heaven, so she could {would}  
Entreat some power to change this dogged° Jew. 138 {currish}

—Nerissa [*aside*]

‘Tis well you offer it behind her back,  
The wish would make else an unquiet house. 139

—Shylock

These be the Christian husbands. I have a daughter— 140  
I’d prefer° any kin° of Barrabas 141 / rather {stock}  
Had been° her husband rather than a Christian. 142 / Would be / To be  
We trifle° time. I pray thee, pursue° sentence. 143 / squander / waste our

—Portia

A pound of that same merchant’s flesh is thine,  
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.

—Shylock

Most rightful° judge! / righteous > correct in judgement

—Portia

And you must cut this flesh from off his breast,  
The law allows it and the court awards it.

---

138. Gratziano’s plea is a comic relief—his friendly love for Antonio would not give him cause to sacrifice his wife on Antonio’s behalf. His comment serves to support the theme of his pairing with Bassanio, a theme that was seen earlier (in the mutual wedding) and which we will see later (with the misplacement of rings). Gratziano’s plea, though misplaced, also gives Shylock some fodder upon which to comment.

139. **unquiet:** a) noisy—from all the screaming; b) restless, anxious, troubled  
/ Else the wish ‘twould make an unquiet house. / Else such a wish would make a troubled house

140. Shylock still claims that he has a daughter. He has not disowned her, nor stated, ‘she is dead to me’— which would usually be the case where a daughter married a Christian (and betrayed her father in doing so).

141. Barrabas: a thief chosen to be released over Jesus. Shylock (after seeing the way that Christians treat their wives) is saying that he would rather have the lowest of all Jews (a thief) marry his daughter rather than a) a Christian (even the highest among Christians), or b) a Christian thief such as Lorenzo.

142. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.294]

143. / I pray, proceed to sentence

—Shylock

Most learned judge! A sentence! [To Antonio] Come, prepare! <sup>144 145 148</sup>

*Antonio is strapped to a chair.*

*Shylock prepares his blade. (Shylock approaches Antonio.)*

—Portia

Tarry a little <sup>149</sup>— there is something else.° / more

This bond doth gives thee here no drop° of blood: {jot}

The words expressly are,° ‘a pound of flesh.’ / say

Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh,

But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed

One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods

Are, by the laws of Venice, forfeited° {confiscate}

Unto the state of Venice.

—Gratziano

O upright judge!

---

144. This line is somewhat haunting in that Shylock is addressing Antonio right before he is about to kill him. A more haunting line would be one where Shylock calls Antonio by name, in a familiar tone, such as: ‘A learned judge. Come, Antonio, prepare.’

145. No stage direction follows this line in Q1. It reads:

*Jew.* Most learned Iudge, a sentence, come prepare.

*Por.* Tarry a little, there is some thing else,  
this bond doth give thee heere no iote of blood,  
the words expresly are a pound of flesh:

For dramatic effect, most productions add some kind of staging after Shylock’s says, ‘Come, prepare.’ We typically see Shylock take out his knife and approach Antonio, sometimes hesitating a bit to regroup, then pulling back his blade, about to cut into Antonio, when Portia suddenly shouts out ‘Tarry a little!’—which brings a halt to Shylock’s immanent action. It is unlikely that the words, *tarry a little*, were intended to stop an action, as they are far too casual and lack all sense of urgency. The charge of *stop* or *wait* might be more apt a command to stop or stay an immanent action, or some other cue.

For the possible insertion of some added lines here, see: Additional Notes, 4.1.300 Also see Additional Notes, 4.1.301a and 4.1.301b]

148. There is an energetic break after line 301 [Most learned judge! A sentence! Come, prepare! ]. During this pause Portia could be summoned over to confer with the Duke. As stated in footnote 121, Portia could initially be summoned to talk with the Duke after line 242, and then again after line 301.

149. **tarry a little:** hold on, wait a moment, hang around a little while longer

This line could come after a) a revelation, when Portia suddenly finds something in the books, such as a new way to read the letter of the law, which then changes the vector of the case (not likely) or b) Portia is ready to bring up a legal argument (which she knew about all along) which thwarts Shylock’s intended course of action.

Many productions have Portia urgently yell out this line in order to stop Shylock right before he is about to stab his knife into Antonio. But this never works and always seems anticlimactic. Such a casual, lingering line would best be delivered *after* Shylock has been thwarted. If Portia intended to stop Shylock’s action, verbally, she would be more likely to yell out something like “Stop!” rather than “Tarry a little.” A possible staging would be for Portia to stop Shylock’s action by making some sudden and loud noise (which could be accomplished by hitting a hard object on the table, slamming down a book, or throwing down a bag of ducats, etc.) then delivering this casual line. However, there is remains a more preferred way stage this part of the scene. For details, please contact the author at JonathanStar.com). [See Additional Notes, 4.1.302]

Hear<sup>o</sup> Jew. O learnèd judge! <sup>150 151</sup>

{Mark}

—Shylock  
Is that the law? <sup>152</sup>

—Portia           Thyself shall see the act.  
<'Tis thine own deeds that fall<sup>o</sup> upon thy head.)  
For as thou urgest justice, be assured,  
Thou shalt have justice more than thou desir'st.<sup>o</sup> <sup>153</sup>

/ Now thy own deeds do fall

/ demanded / requested

—Gratziano  
O learnèd judge! Hear,<sup>o</sup> Jew—a learnèd judge!

{Mark} > 'mark my words'

—Shylock  
I take this offer, then. Pay thrice the bond  
And let the Christian go.

{Pay the bond thrice}

—Bassanio                   Here is the money. <sup>154</sup>

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150. {O upright Judge | Mark Jew, O learned Judge.}

This is the first of Gratziano's mocking repetitions of Shylock and his praise of the judge. Gratziano repeats his counter-attack on the 'Jew' in a mantra-like fashion: O upright judge! Mark, Jew. O learnèd judge! [310]; O learnèd judge! Mark, Jew—a learnèd judge! [314]; O Jew! An upright judge, a learnèd judge! [319]; A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew! [329]; A Daniel, still I say, a second Daniel! | I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word. [336]

151. In the original, two iambs are missing—which could suggest a pause. Some editions place the 'pause' after Portia's last line [Unto the state of Venice]—which is clearly *not* indicated in Q1. Other editions place the pause after Portia's line [Thyself shall see the act], which is possible, but unlikely.

Por: Unto the State of Venice [pause 1]

Gra: O upright judge! Mark Jew. O learnèd judge! [pause 2]

Shy: Is that the law

Por: Thyself shall see the act. [pause 3]

There is unlikely to be a pause [1] after Portia renders her judgment because Gratziano, in jubilation, would call out at once nor after Portia's words, *Thyself shall see the act*, [3] because it comes in the middle of a thought. The most likely place for a pause would come after Gratziano's line, *Mark Jew. O learnèd judge!*, [2] where a stunned Shylock must collect his thoughts—in the span of two iambs—before giving a reply.

152. This line is fitting, and would be said with surprise, in the case where Shylock's intention (to kill Antonio) is thwarted by Portia. If the play was tweaked such that Shylock were made to spare Antonio's life (before being forced to do so by Portia), this line would appear astray. A more likely line would be: 'Here, I take the offer.' This tweak is not supported by the dialogue in the play but a decidedly pro-Shylock production could force it in.

153. **thou shalt have justice:** This refers to the same kind of justice previously demanded by Shylock—justice without mercy, justice according to the strict letter of the law. Herein Portia turns Shylock's own merciless literalism against him and out-literalizes him. She repeats this same charge for justice a few lines later, saying: 'The Jew shall have all justice' [317]; 'He shall have merely justice and the bond.' [335]. Ironically, Portia is now embodying the exact position (justice without mercy) that she had previously argued against. Her position now reflects a decidedly partial and "human" one: since Shylock did not grant mercy he does not deserve to receive it. One might argue that Portia's new stance is contrary to God's all-embracing (non-judgmental) mercy which is dispensed without consideration of a person's deservedness, earned worthiness, or past actions.

/ 'Tis thine own deeds that fall upon thy head

154. Bassanio is liberally offering his (and Portia's) money even though the case has already turned against Shylock. Either Bassanio is ignorant and naive (unaware that he can save himself 3000 ducats), impatient and aloof (having no concern about the 3000 ducats, only that Antonio be delivered without another moment's delay), or equitable (feeling that Shylock deserves, at least, the return of his principle); after all, Shylock's money did help Bassanio win Portia.).

Is Portia being cruel or prudent? Is she seeking to harm Shylock in retribution for his inhumane actions against Antonio or is she refusing to have Bassanio pay the bond (even though he is eager and willing to pay it) as part of her own financial motivation? Her purpose to save Antonio has already been accomplished; her destruction of Shylock is something she herself—beyond the call of duty or purpose—has brought to bear.

As mentioned in the analysis of the main characters of the play, using the theory of Character Types (a full explanation of which can be found at the end of the website), Portia comes into the courtroom as a Type 3 (which is her natural Type) and thus tries to solve her problem in a typical Type 3 way—through shrewdness, ingenuity, appealing to reason,

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circumvention, even deception and beguilement. However, she fails. So, she steps up her game and tries to be even more persuasive, more ingenious, more Type 3, but fails again. According to the theory of Character Types, when a person fails, or runs up against a wall, using the means that are natural to his Character Type, his first response is to increase the intensity of the same action. If that fails again—and he comes to realize that that same kind of action will keep on failing—he may switch to the opposite Type, which is not necessarily natural to him but is available to him in times of crisis, or when he hits an impasse. In this case, once Portia tries to appeal to Shylock in every way she can, and then “hits a wall,” and sees that her present stratagem will not move Shylock, she shifts from a Type 3 approach to its opposite, which is Type 9. This approach is straight-forward and uncompromising; it is based on a guileless, frontal assault, and it can be somewhat merciless. Portia comes into the courtroom as a Type 3, exhibiting all the typical Type 3 ways to try and resolve the issue; when this fails she switches to a Type 9 approach, a steamroller approach, and proceeds to destroy Shylock, even after Antonio has been saved. After the courts scene ends she quickly refers back to her Type 3 approach (using charm, indirect means, trickery, etc.) to test Bassanio’s love for her. If she stayed a Type 9, the moment she was alone with Bassanio she would have pulled off her disguise and berated him for all the things he said about her in the courtroom.

—Portia [*raising her hand*]

Soft,° the Jew° shall have all justice. Soft, no haste—<sup>155 156</sup> / Wait // He  
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

—Gratziano

O Jew! An upright judge, a learnèd judge!

—Portia

Therefore, prepare thee to cut off the flesh.

Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more

But just a° pound of flesh. If thou tak'st more

/ But a just

Or less than a just pound, be it by° so much

{but}

As makes it light or heavy by the weight° <sup>157</sup>

{in the substance}

Or the division of a twentieth part

Of one poor scruple°—nay, if the scales do turn°

/ gram / ounce<sup>158</sup> // tip / move

But in° the measure of a single hair,° <sup>159</sup>

/ Upon {But in the estimation of a hair}

Thou diest,° and all thy goods will be taken.° <sup>160</sup>

/ You'll die {are confiscate} / are forfeited

—Gratziano

A second Daniel. Here, O Jew, a Daniel!<sup>161</sup>

Now, infidel, I have you in my grip.°

{on the hip}<sup>162</sup>

—Portia

Why doth the Jew pause? Take thy forfeiture.

—Shylock

Give me my principle° and let me go.

/ the sum I'm owed

---

155. **soft, no haste:** don't rush things, there is no need to take any rash actions—hold back and let the matter follow its course. In consort with a previous stage direction, Portia could slam something down, and make a loud noise—to signal a stop to Bassanio's offer—and then come back with some "soft" words.

156. {Soft! The Jew shall have all justice. Soft, no haste.}

/ Soft, for the Jew shall have only justice / The Jew shall have all justice. Soft, no haste!

The line, as it appears in Q1 and F [Soft, the Jew shall have all justice, soft no haste] is problematic in that it contains 11 syllables and does not conform to the standard meter, where the 4<sup>th</sup> syllable is emphatic. To correct this problem, most editions break the line into two, with one word [Soft!] on the first line, the additional ten syllables on the second line:

Por: Soft!

The Jew shall have all justice. Soft, no haste.

157. / As that which makes it high or low in weight | By the

158. **a scruple:** a very small weight, equal to 1/24 oz.

159. / But in the measure equal to a hair / By but the distance (/measure) of a single hair

**estimation:** refers to some measure or value, either a) the distance that the indicator of the scale moves (if the balance indicator of the scales move by a distance of a hair, in either direction) or b) the weight of one hair (if one side weighs a hair more than the other).

160. / Of but one twentieth part of an ounce— | Nay, if the scales do tip upon the weight | Of but a single hair, then thou will die | And all thy goods will go unto the state.

161. {A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew}

162. **on the hip:** Refers to a wrestling term where one opponent has the other by the hip, and thus commands a position of advantage. It could also be stated: 'Now I have the better of you,' 'Now I have the advantage' or, more literally, 'Now I've got hold of you' or 'Now I've got a grip on you.' The same expression was used by Shylock when first referring to Antonio [1.3.43-44]: 'If I can catch him once upon the hip | I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.'—'If I can, but once, grab hold of him . . .'



—Portia Tarry Jew,  
 The law hath yet another hold on you.<sup>171</sup>  
 It is enacted° in the laws of Venice,  
 If it be proved against a foreigner,°<sup>172</sup>  
 That by direct or indirect attempts  
 He seek the life of any citizen  
 The party ‘gainst the which he doth conspire<sup>174</sup>  
 Shall seize° one half° his goods; the other half  
 Goes° to the private° coffer of the state,  
 And the offender’s life lies in the mercy  
 Of the Duke only, and his word is final.°<sup>175</sup>  
 In this° predicament I say thou stand’st.  
 For it appears, by all that has transpired,°<sup>176 177</sup>  
 That indirectly, and directly too,°  
 Thou hast contrived against the very life  
 Of the defendant,° and thou hast incurred°  
 The very crime° that I° just now° stated.<sup>178</sup>  
 Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke.<sup>179</sup>

/ here written  
 {an alien}<sup>173</sup>  
 {contrive} /thus has plotted  
 / get // come by half  
 {Comes} {privy}  
 {‘gainst all other voice}  
 {which}  
 {by manifest proceedings}  
 / That both directly, and indirectly  
 / this same merchant // committed  
 {danger} {by me} {formerly}/ previously

—Gratziano<sup>180</sup>  
 Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself!  
 And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,  
 Thou hast not sums enough to buy the rope.°  
 Therefore, thou must be hanged at the state’s charge.<sup>181</sup>

{not left the value of the cord}

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171. In the source novella (*Il Perecone*), upon which the story of *The Merchant of Venice* is based, the Jewish usurer is defeated by the wits of the female judge, the merchant is saved, and the Jew leaves the court with nothing, not even his principal. Here, the author departs from the source story by adding proceedings where the Jew is not only defeated but destroyed—both in terms of his wealth and his Judaism. The forced conversion of Shylock is not found in the source story. [See Additional Note, 4.1.342]  
 172. Shylock is held to be an *alien*, not a *citizen*.  
 173. **alien**: refers to foreigners and non-Venetians. Jews, at the time, were not allowed to own property in Venice and were therefore held as ‘aliens.’  
 174. / The party ‘gainst whom he hath so contrived  
 175. / So granted by the Duke, whose word is final / Of the good Duke, who has the final word  
 / And the offender’s life lies in what mercy | Is bestowed by the Duke  
 176. / For it appears, as all those here have witnessed  
 177. {In which predicament I say thou stand’st; | For it appears by manifest proceeding}  
 / And this predicament is one in which  
 Thou stand. For it appears, by these proceedings° / by your own actions / all we’ve witnessed  
 / And this predicament, I say, is one | In which thou stand. As everyone has witnessed  
 / And this, I say, is the predicament | In which thou stand. For it has so appeared, | By the proceedings, witnessed here by all  
 178. {The danger formerly by me rehearsed}  
 / The penalty that I have erstwhile stated / The punishment of which I have just stated  
 179. Again, we see that Portia’s actions—aiming to harm Shylock—go beyond the call of what was needed to free Antonio. We can only surmise that her intention changed midstream after she encountered Shylock, a person whose demeanor, vengefulness, and complete lack of mercy was alien and offensive to Portia’s human sentiments. As such, she found herself newly motivated—after she had delivered Antonio—to now try and destroy or diminish this abhorrent person.  
 180. As part of the staging, Gratziano could run over to ‘help’ Shylock get down on his knees.  
 181. For some dialogue which could be included here, see Additional Notes: 4.1.363

—Duke

That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,  
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.  
For half thy wealth—it is Antonio’s.  
The other half goes<sup>o</sup> to the general state,  
Which humbleness may drive unto<sup>o</sup> a fine.<sup>182</sup>

/ As for thy wealth, one half goes to Antonio.  
{ comes }  
/ lesson to

—Portia

Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.<sup>184</sup>

—Shylock

Nay, take my life and all! Pardon not that!  
You take my house when you do take the prop  
That doth sustain my house<sup>185</sup>; you take my life  
When you do take the means whereby I live.<sup>186</sup>  
〈Nay, show your Christian mercy—kill me now!〉

—Portia

What mercy can you render him, Antonio?<sup>189</sup>

—Gratziano

A noose, for free<sup>o</sup>—and nothing else by God!<sup>190</sup>

{ A halter, gratis }

—Antonio

So please my lord, the Duke, and all the court  
To quit the fine for one half of his goods—  
I am content with that,<sup>191</sup> so long as he  
Will let me use the other half in trust

/ To drop

---

182. / Lest humbleness reduce it to a fine.

184. Why is Portia so keen on making sure that Antonio be given half of Shylock’s money? What is her agenda in assuring this outcome? Why not have the Duke forgive the whole amount—both the state’s and Antonio’s debt—or simply drive both “unto a fine”? [See Additional Notes, 4.1.335] 4.1.369 ???

185. **house:** in the first instance, it is used in the biblical sense of one’s lineage or the ‘the house of Abraham’; in the second instance it refers to Shylock’s house (or symbolically, his life) and the wealth (prop) which sustains or supports it.

186. The following passage could replace the original:

‘Tis more esteemed<sup>o</sup> that<sup>o</sup> you take a man’s life / fitting  
Than cast him into hellish poverty.  
You take<sup>o</sup> my wealth, the labor of my life,  
The comfort of mine age, my children’s hope—

This passage was derived from Marlow’s, *The Jew of Malta*. It is likely that Shakespeare fashioned Shylock’s lines after those of Marlow’s Barabas, who uttered these lines after losing all his money:

Why I esteem the injury far less, | To take the lives of miserable men, | Than be the causers of their misery;

You have my wealth, the labor of my life, | The comfort of mine age, my children’s hope; | And there ne’er distinguish of the wrong.

189. Shylock’s plea may have softened Portia, who a few moments before was quick to make certain that the Duke’s forgiveness only extended so far as the state and not Antonio. Here, she asks Antonio to show mercy, and he shows a Christian brand of mercy. This ‘show of mercy’ delivers Shylock to a much worse position than he was in before Antonio was called on to show his mercy. Before, Shylock lost his principle and half his wealth; after, Shylock lost his principle, half his money was put into a trust, and he was forced to convert to Christianity—which deprived him of his faith, his lifestyle, his livelihood, (usury), and the support of his fellow Jews.

190. For additional lines, see Additional Notes, 4.1.379

191. Antonio is ‘content’ and agrees with the Duke’s show of mercy, that the state forgives the fine for one half of Shylock’s wealth—under the condition that Antonio gets the other half to use in trust.

To give, upon his death, unto the Christian<sup>192</sup>  
 Who, as of late,<sup>o</sup> did steal away<sup>o</sup> his daughter.<sup>193</sup> / recently  
 And two conditions more:<sup>o</sup> that for this favour<sup>o</sup><sup>194</sup> {Two things provided more} / kindness  
 He presently forswear<sup>o</sup> all acts of usury.<sup>o</sup><sup>195</sup> / renounce {become a Christian}<sup>196</sup>  
 ‹That he may garner a more Christian kindness.›<sup>o</sup> / cultivate a Christian kindness  
 The other, that he do record a gift,  
 Which leaves upon his death, all his possessions<sup>197</sup>  
 Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

—Duke  
 He shall do this or else I do recant / withdraw / retract  
 The pardon that I just<sup>o</sup> pronouncèd here. {late} // The pardon I of late

—Portia  
 Art thou contented Jew?<sup>198</sup> What dost thou say?

—Shylock  
 I am content.<sup>199</sup>

192. {I am content, so he will let me have | The other half in use, to render it | Upon his death, unto the gentleman}  
 / I am content with that, so long as I | Can use the other half in trust, and give it | Upon his death . . .  
 / The other half I am hereby content | To use in trust, and then to render it | Upon his death . . .

193. {That lately stole his daughter}  
 The original line is short, containing three iambs as opposed to five.  
 / That, as of late, did steal away his daughter.

194. Antonio has provided a meager ‘favour’ to Shylock: instead of taking half his wealth he is going to have the money put into a trust (which Antonio manages). This arrangement is set up by Antonio to preserve the principal, so that Lorenzo (and Jessica) will have some assured wealth when Shylock dies. The benefit afforded to Shylock with this arrangement—which is unclear—would be if Shylock were the beneficiary of any profit gained from the management of the trust. Hence, the most favorable arrangement set up by Antonio would be as follows: Shylock would put up half his money in trust, Antonio would manage the money, Shylock would gain whatever profit was made, and Lorenzo and Jessica would receive the principal upon Shylock’s death.

195. The original line reads: ‘He presently become a Christian.’ This forced conversion of Shylock is the most controversial and problematic line in the play. Such a conversion was not found in any of the source stories used by Shakespeare (such as the play’s primary source, *Il Perecone*). In those versions the Jewish money-lender is foiled, the bond is forfeit, the merchant is saved, and the Jew loses his principal—and storms out of court in defeat. The forced conversion of Shylock to Christianity is Shakespeare’s addition; rather than ‘the Jew’ storming out of court he leaves as an enfeebled and broken man. Some productions use this destructive ending to further present Shylock as a victim while others chose to delete this line altogether. The primary reason I have replaced it with a sanction barring Shylock from usury is that the original line is unnecessary, confusing, and diminishes the character of both Antonio and Shylock. This forced conversion was likely an extension of Antonio’s brand of Christian of charity, his effort to save Shylock’s soul from eternal damnation.

In this rectification I have made it clear that the whole of Antonio’s dispute with Shylock is founded upon his “ungodly” usury not his Jewishness. Thus, Antonio forcing Shylock to convert to Christianity obscures and displaces the real issue here; it brings to the forefront the difference between Christian and Jew rather than the difference between Antonio’s Christian charity and the morally bereft and ruinous practice of usury.

[See Additional Notes, 4.1.383] For a further discussion on Shylock’s forced conversion see Appendix.

196. A production that preserves Shylock’s conversion, could have him voice a few lines of protest rather than the presenting—as in the original—a stark implosion of his character and an uncharacteristically sheepish acceptance of his fate. [See Additional Notes, 4.1.382]

197. {Here in the court, of all he dies possessed} / Here in the court, which leaves all owned at death / In court, that all he owns at death will go / Here in the court, all he owns at his death.

198. Portia is still calling Shylock ‘Jew.’ Though, in the original, where he must convert to Christianity, we see that the ‘conversion’ is merely a glossing over; Shylock will, at heart and in secret—and in the eyes of all Christians—remain a Jew. Even his daughter, who married a Christian, and willingly converted to Christianity, is still regarded by her fellow Christians as an ‘infidel’ [3.2.216]—a Jew masquerading as a Christian.

199. At this point, Shylock is portrayed as a broken man—having been stripped of half his wealth and forced (without a fight) to convert to Christianity. Here he utters a feckless and feeble, *I am content*, simply mouthing back Portia’s own words, without any hint of protest. It may be that Shylock’s quick acceptance may be a result of calculation rather than total defeat: he may be wanting to protect the money he has left and avoid opening himself up to, yet unknown, further harm. His words, *I am content*, surely belies his true position—he is not content. He might be thinking: ‘I am content to say ‘I am content.’ But as for the Christian duplicity—cheating me of my earned wealth, I am very far from being content.’

—Portia [*to Nerissa*] Clerk, write<sup>o</sup> a deed of gift. {draw} > draw up / write up

—Shylock  
I pray you, give me leave to go from hence.  
I am not well.<sup>200</sup> Send the deed after me,  
And I will sign it.

—Duke Get thee gone,<sup>o</sup> but do it. / You may go

—Gratziano [*to Shylock*]  
Had I been judge, thou would not walk from court:  
I would have found twelve men to make a jury  
Who, upon finding you guilty, would drag  
You by the feet straightway<sup>o</sup> unto the gallows.<sup>201</sup>

*Exit Shylock*<sup>202</sup>

—Duke [*to Portia*]  
Sir, I entreat you with me home for dinner.

—Portia  
I humbly do request<sup>o</sup> your grace of<sup>o</sup> pardon. {desire} / graceful  
I must away this night toward Padua,  
And it is best<sup>o</sup> I presently set forth.<sup>o</sup> {meet} / that I set forth at once

—Duke  
I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.  
Antonio, fully thank<sup>o</sup> this gentleman<sup>o</sup> {gratify} // thank wholeheartedly this man  
For, in my mind, you are much in his debt.<sup>o</sup><sup>203</sup> {bound to him}

*Exeunt Duke and his attendants*

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200. In productions where Shylock is a ‘broken man,’ he is not well—and because he is not well, and feeling sickly—he desires to leave the court. In productions where Shylock is still intact, this is clearly a rouse to get himself out of the court and removed from harm’s way. *I am not feeling well* is decidedly a cliché excuse, which cannot be taken at face value. Like the mouthed words, *I am content*, Shylock’s *I am not well* is not likely to express his true state.

201. In the original, where Shylock is converted to Christianity, Gratziano refers to the ‘mercy’ of Shylock’s upcoming baptism: {In christ’ning shalt thou have two godfathers.

Had I been the judge, thou shouldst have had ten more—  
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font. }

An emended version of this passage might read as follows:

/ In christening<sup>o</sup> shalt thou have two godfathers. / baptism

Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more—  
To make a jury which, finding you guilty,  
‘Twould bring thee to the gallows, not the font.

Gratziano is saying: Besides the two godfathers (who will accompany you at baptism) I, being judge, would have rather asked for ten more men to make up a jury of twelve men, who would then find you guilty of the charge and bring you to the gallows (to be hanged) instead of to the font (to be baptized).

202. Shylock’s exit determines the amount of sympathy the audience has for him. He could glumly walk out of the court. He could be jeered at as he walks out. Or, more brutally, Gratziano could grab Shylock ‘by the hip,’ wrestle him to the ground, and then (along with several helpers) push him out of the court (or drag him out). When tackled to the ground, Shylock drops his bag. It could be emptied and mockingly placed over his head. Then Gratziano kicks the faceless Shylock out of court.

203. / Antonio, give your fullest gratitude | To this man; thinks me you’re much in his debt.

—Bassanio [*to Portia*]

Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend  
Have, by your wisdom, been this day delivered<sup>o</sup>  
Of grievous penalties, in lieu whereof,  
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,<sup>204</sup>  
We freely give for all your courteous<sup>o</sup> pains.<sup>205</sup>

{ acquitted } / relieved  
/ From  
  
// gracious

—Antonio

Yet, over and above, in love and service,<sup>206</sup>  
We stand forevermore within your debt.<sup>o 207 208</sup>

/ indebted to you evermore

—Portia [*refusing*]

He is well-paid who<sup>o</sup> is well-satisfied  
And I, in helping you,<sup>o</sup> am satisfied,  
And therein do account myself well-paid.  
It ne'er did cross<sup>o</sup> my mind to ask for payment.<sup>209</sup> / never crossed  
[*to Bassanio*] I pray you, 'know' me when we meet again.<sup>210</sup>  
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

{ that }  
{ delivering you }

—Bassanio<sup>211</sup>

Dear sir, perforce<sup>o</sup> I must entreat<sup>o</sup> you further—<sup>212</sup>  
Take some remembrance of us as a tribute,  
Not as fee. Grant me two things, I pray you:  
Not to deny me this kind-hearted<sup>o</sup> offer  
And ere to pardon me for such insistence.<sup>o 213</sup>

{ of force } { attempt } / beseech  
  
/ a sincere and kind  
/ persistence // being so bold

—Portia

You press me far, and therefore I will yield:  
Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake.<sup>214</sup>

/ to oblige you

---

204. / Have, by the wisdom you've shown us this day, | Been spared of grievous penalties; in lieu / Whereof, three thousand ducats owed the Jew,

205. { We freely cope your courteous pains withal }  
/ We freely offer you for all your pains. / We freely give to you for all your pains.

**cope:** match, give in exchange for

206. / O'er and above,<sup>o</sup> in both love and in service / Far and beyond

207. / We stand forever indebted to you / We stand here now forever in your debt

208. { And stand indebted, over and above | In love and service to you evermore. }

209. { My mind was never yet more mercenary }

/ My mind was never bent on compensation / hope of payment / on recompense

210. **know me:** a) recognize me, b) make love with me.

This word is found in a biblical context, as in 'Adam *knew* Eve.' Portia is saying, 'I pray (hope) you know me in a different way (as husband and wife) when we meet again.' She might also be saying: 'I pray (hope) you make love with me when we meet again'—as you failed to do so on our wedding night."

211. Some productions have Bassanio run after Portia, and these lines are delivered without Antonio being immediately present. Other productions have the dialogue continues with Antonio present.

212. / Dear sir, please wait, I must insist again—

213. { Not to deny me, and to pardon me. }

214. Many editions add the stage direction, [*to Antonio*], indicating that Antonio is present and that Portia is requesting of him his gloves. This is possible; however it may be that Portia requests the gloves from Bassanio, as Antonio may not be sporting a pair of gloves at this time. If Bassanio is wearing gloves, then Portia's request would be apt, because the removal of Bassanio's gloves would then reveal his ring. This is the real intention of why Portia would ask for Bassanio's gloves—so she can see, and then ask for, his ring. Asking for Antonio's gloves seems a bit odd as a 'tribute.' [See Additional Notes, 4.1.422]

And for your love, I'll take this ring from you.<sup>215</sup>  
[*he draws back his hand*]  
Do not draw back your hand—I'll take no more.<sup>216</sup>  
And you, in love, shall not deny me this!<sup>217</sup>

—Bassanio

This ring, good sir, alas, it is<sup>o</sup> a trifle.<sup>218</sup> / is but  
I will not shame myself to give you this.

—Portia

I will have nothing else, but only this;  
And now, methinks, I have a wish for it.<sup>o</sup> {I have a mind to it} / I grow quite fond of it

—Bassanio

There's more depends on this than on the value.<sup>219</sup>  
The dearest<sup>o</sup> ring in Venice will I give you; > most expensive  
And find it out by searching through the city.<sup>o</sup><sup>220</sup> {proclamation} / a public announcement  
Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

—Portia

I see, sir, you are liberal<sup>o</sup> in offers.<sup>221</sup> / generous  
You taught<sup>o</sup> me first to beg and now methinks / urged  
You teach me how a beggar should<sup>o</sup> be answered.<sup>222</sup> / must

—Bassanio

Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife.  
And when she put it on she made me vow  
That I should<sup>o</sup> neither<sup>o</sup> sell, nor give, nor lose it. / would / never

---

215. **for your love:** A customary politeness, which, in the usual sense would mean, 'as a token of your love,' or 'as a sign of your affection and/or gratitude.'

**take this ring:** A more forceful position than, 'I'll accept this ring.' *Take* is used here in contrast to *give*: Portia's initial statement, which placed the ring on Bassanio's finger—and the giving of herself and all she owned to him—was *I give them with this ring*. [3.2.171]. She is here playing the one who *gives* and the one who *takes*—as opposed to the more docile figure who would *receive*.

216. **I'll take no more:** Here she light-heartedly suggests to Bassanio that he need not be afraid, she will not take his hand, just the ring. Ironically, Bassanio later thinks to cut off his own hand (and say he lost the ring in a fight) in order to avert Portia's rage at him for giving away the ring. [5.1.177-78].

217. **in love:** in kindness. It could mean, 'you, in the name of love.' This statement carries an ironic overtone, for Bassanio in giving away the ring *in love* to the doctor, is symbolically giving away his love for Portia (who gave him the ring).

218. / This ring good sir?—Alas it is a trifle.

219. This ring has more upon it than its value / This ring holds something more than outer value

220. {And find it out by proclamation}

/ And find it through a public advertisement / And go in search of it both near and far

Bassanio offers to find the most valuable ring in Venice by way of proclamation (making an announcement or distributing a printed advertisement). This offer suggests the great lengths that Bassanio is willing to go through in order to find another ring (a much more valuable ring), even to suggest the image of Bassanio standing in a public square, yelling out (by proclamation) that he seeks to buy the most valuable ring in Venice.

221. > You are liberal (only) in what you offer but not in what you actually give (once the offer is accepted).

222. / You answer me now as you would a beggar

—Portia

That ‘scuse<sup>o</sup> serves many men to save their gifts. <sup>223</sup> / ploy  
And if your wife be not a madwoman, <sup>224</sup>  
And know how well I have deserved this ring, <sup>225</sup>  
She would not hold you in contempt<sup>o</sup> forever <sup>226</sup> {hold out enemy} / bear you enmity  
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you!

*Exeunt Portia and Nerissa*

—Antonio

My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring. <sup>227</sup>  
Let his deservings<sup>o</sup> and my love for you<sup>o</sup> {withal} / in all  
Be valued ‘gainst<sup>o</sup> the vow made to<sup>o</sup> your wife. <sup>228</sup> / weighed against

—Bassanio [*gives the ring to Gratiano*]

Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him.  
Give him the ring, and bring him, if thou canst,<sup>o</sup> / and bid him dine with us  
Unto Antonio’s house. Away! Make haste!

*Exit Gratiano*

⟨And now, dear friend, the world is truly right,  
‘Tis time we<sup>o</sup> cheer and laugh into the night. ⟩ / Now let us  
When morning comes,<sup>o</sup> unto Belmont we go, / And when dawn breaks  
In blessed freedom<sup>o</sup>—come Antonio. <sup>229 230</sup>

*Exeunt*

---

223. / By that excuse, a man may save his gift.

224. / And if your wife be not wrought<sup>o</sup> with madness / tinged / struck

225. / Should she know how well I deserved this ring

226. {She would not hold out enemy for ever}

**hold out enemy:** hold you as an enemy; hate you; be angry with you  
/ She would not be your enemy forever / She’d not be angry at you forever / She would not hold a long grudge  
against you

227. **My Lord:** a formal term which appeals to Bassanio’s newfound status—and refers to his being lord over his house  
and his wife. A more likely expression may have been, ‘My dear Bassanio.’

228. {Be valued ‘gainst your wife’s commandment}

/ Be weighed against the vow you made your wife / the promise made to your wife

229. Q1 reads as follows:

{Come, you and I will go thither presently.  
And in the morning, early, we will both  
Fly toward Belmont. Come, Antonio.}

Often times a rhyming couplet is used to mark the close of a scene, however, no such couplet is found in the original.

230. / And in the morning, early we will go | And fly to Belmont. Come, Antonio.

/ When morning comes, to Belmont we will fly, | Without a care, together, you and I.

/ Come, you and I have finishèd this plight, | Now let us cheer with friends into the night.

Unto your house, let’s go, without delay | And fly to Belmont ‘pon the break of day.

ACT FOUR - Scene 2

*A street in Venice. Enter Portia and Nerissa, still in disguise*<sup>1</sup>

—Portia

Inquire the way unto the Jew's abode,<sup>2</sup> / Find out  
And have him sign the deed. We'll then away<sup>3</sup> / We'll leave tonight  
And be at home a day before our husbands.  
This deed will be a blessing<sup>o</sup> to Lorenzo. {well welcome}

*Enter Gratiano*

—Gratiano

Fair sir, at last, I have ov'rtaken you.<sup>o</sup><sup>4</sup> / I have caught up with you  
My Lord Bassanio, upon more advice,<sup>o</sup> / reflection > consideration  
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat / request  
Your company at dinner.

—Portia That cannot be . . .<sup>5</sup>

<For we must leave for Padua tonight.<sup>o</sup>> / at once  
But I accept his ring<sup>o</sup> most thankfully, {His ring I do accept}  
And so<sup>o</sup> I pray you tell him. Furthermore, / thus  
I pray you show my youth old Shylock's house.

—Gratiano

That I will do.

---

1. Of course, Portia, who was called in to settle the matter between Shylock and Antonio, would not be involved in the tedious administration of drafting the deed of gifts nor would she be sent to Shylock's house to have it signed by him—especially not after she indicated her need to return to Padua forthwith. In addition, the fact that Portia has no legal experience would be revealed had she anything to do with the drafting of Shylock's deed of gift. Yet, despite the unlikelihood of the scene, it is needed to allow time for Nerissa to obtain her ring from Gratiano, and also allow her time to get hold of the deed of gift to give to Lorenzo.

2. / Inquire directions unto the Jew's house / Have someone show you the way to the Jew's house

3. {Inquire the Jew's house out, give him the deed | And let him sign it. We'll away tonight.}

4. {Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en} **o'erta'en**: overtaken. Q1: ore-tane

Some editors feel that this line was truncated so that Gratiano had a chance to regain his breath, after a chase. The pause, however, is not warranted and the shortened line (along with the awkward contraction, 'o'erta'en, —may be a result of an unreadable portion of text. Since this truncated line adds no appreciable meaning to the text the iambic pentameter has been restored.

/ Fair sir, I have at last, caught up with you. / Fair sir, I've come upon you at last. Hence,

5. The subject of Portia's negation ('that cannot be') is unclear: it could refer to her disbelief that Bassanio gave up his ring and/or to the impossibility of her joining Bassanio for dinner—though, if it be the later, then the response of 'I cannot' would bring more clarity. (The Duke had already entreated her to join him for dinner—which she humbly denied [397-400] so there would be no way for her accept Bassanio's invitation. Obviously Bassanio did not hear the Duke's prior invitation or Portia's reply).

The most likely playing of this line is for Portia to speak the words in disbelief (to others or bemusingly to herself), in reference to Bassanio having given up his ring. But then she catches herself, pauses, and qualifies her previous line as a reference to her not being able to meet Bassanio for dinner. In the original, the reference of 'that cannot be' is uncertain, though it later seems to refer to the dinner invitation. In the rectification, a clarifying line has been added to make her intent more explicit—and to support the staging that is herein suggested.









—Lorenzo Who calls?

—Launcelet Da-doo! Did you see Master Lorenzo? [*calling*] Master Lorenzo! Da-doo, Da-doo!<sup>16</sup>

—Lorenzo

Leave<sup>o</sup> hollering<sup>o</sup> man: I am here!<sup>17</sup> /Stop {halloaing}

—Launcelet Where? Where?<sup>18 19</sup>

—Lorenzo Here!

—Launcelet

Tell him there's a messenger<sup>o</sup> come from my master with his mouth<sup>o</sup> full of good news. My master will be here before morning.<sup>20</sup> messenger: {post} mouth: {horn}

*Exit*

—Lorenzo

Sweet soul, let's in<sup>o</sup> and there await<sup>o</sup> their coming. {expect}  
And yet no matter—why should we go in?  
My friend Stephano, please announce,<sup>o</sup> I pray you, {signify}/ please tell them  
Within the house, their mistress is at hand,<sup>o</sup> / soon approaches / is nearby  
And bring some music forth into the air.<sup>21</sup>

*Exit Stephano*

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon the bank.  
Here we will sit and let the sounds<sup>o</sup> of music / strains  
Creep in our ears. Soft stillness and the night / Let  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.<sup>22</sup>  
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor<sup>o</sup> of heaven<sup>o</sup> / vault // the nighted sky

16. {Sola, did you see M. *Lorenzo*, & M. *Lorenzo* sola, sola}— Q1

Most editions treat the ampersand as a misprint for question mark, which is suspect, since there is also a comma, but justifiable since this line is in the form of a question. 'M.' is also an abbreviation for Master (or Mistress) and most editions fill out the 'M. Lorenzo' to read 'Master Lorenzo.'

Varied forms of punctuation are: 'Sola! Did you see Master Lorenzo? Master Lorenzo, sola, sola.' (Oxford, Cambridge, Arden, Folger); 'Sola! Did you see Master Lorenzo? [*Calls.*] Master Lorenzo! Sola! Sola!' (Arden); 'Sola! Did you see Master Lorenzo and Mistress Lorenzo? Sola, sola!' (Norton, Signet)

17. {Leave hollowing man, here.}

hollering (Oxford, Applause); holloaing (Cambridge, Kittredge Norton, Pelican, Signet); holloing (Bevington)

**leave hollowing:** a) leave hollering—stop hollering, b) leave halloaing—stop making hunting calls

18. {Sola! Where, where?}

In the previous line, a second iamb was added (instead of 'here' it reads, 'here I am'); thus, in this line, one iamb has been removed 45('sola') to preserve the meter.

19. Launcelet continues with his mocking: he clearly knows the whereabouts of Lorenzo but continues to ignore him. This could be a metaphor for Lorenzo's low status and wealth (which no one can see). Launcelet's mockery continues in the next line when he is delivering a message to Lorenzo yet referring to him in the third person, as though he were not there: *Tell him there's a post come from my master.*

20. Q1 reads, {My master will be here ere morning, sweet soul.} Most editions transpose the last iamb ('sweet soul') which is decidedly out of place here, to Lorenzo's next line, which not only fits the context, but completes the meter.

21. / And have the players fill the air with music.

22. **touches:** notes produced by the fingers touching the strings of an instrument, especially a harp

Is thick inlaid with patterns° of bright gold. {patens}<sup>23</sup>  
 In but° the smallest orb° which thou behold'st {There's not} / Even // star  
 There sounds° the heavenly voice of an angel<sup>24 25</sup> / plays / shines  
 In the e'erlasting° choir of cherubins.<sup>26 27</sup> / eternal  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls,  
 But whilst this earthly body° of decay {muddy vesture}  
 Doth grossly close it in,° we cannot hear it.<sup>28 29</sup> / cover it

*Enter musicians*

[to the musicians] Come ho, and wake Diana° with a hymn;<sup>30 31</sup> / the moonlight  
 With° sweetest touches<sup>32</sup> find° your mistress' ear,<sup>33</sup> {pierce} / reach  
 And draw° her home with music. / guide

*Music plays*

—Jessica  
 I'm° never merry when I hear sweet<sup>34</sup> music.<sup>35 36</sup> {I am}

---

23. **patens**: small dishes or plates, often made of gold, used in Holy Communion. F2 emends *patens* with *patterns*, which is in keeping with the imagery of harmony—especially since constellations were thought to reflect the patterns of human life—but less precise. *Pattern* is used here, not because it is more apt but because it is more readily understood than *patens*.  
 24. / There, in his motion, sings as would an angel / Sings in his motion like a blessed angel / There, in his motion, like an angel sings / His motion plays like the song of an angel / His motion sings with the voice of an angel / His motion sounds as does an angel sing  
 25. {There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st | But in his motion like an angel sings} / There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st | That, in his motion, sings not like an angel  
 26. {Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubins} Q1: still quiring  
**still choiring**: eternally singing, always singing in perfect harmony.  
**cherubins**: This is an irregular plural form, which, along with *cherubims*, was used up til the mid seventeenth century. (The common plural for *cherub* is *cherubim*). *Young-eyed cherubins* refers to their sight being ever-young—eternally clear-sighted, but also it could refer to a child's sight which is ever-innocent, accepting, and non-judgmental. Being *young-eyed* could also refer to cherubim who *appear* as young-eyed, as beautiful children (with wings), which is the way they were often represented in Renaissance art. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.62]  
 27. Even the motion of the smallest orb,  
 Is part of a grand symphony, his motion  
 Plays a song which none but an angel sings, / Plays notes which only an angel could sing.  
 In a choir of heavenly voices. / Singing in consort to the cherubins  
 28. Lorenzo is saying that we cannot hear the 'music of the spheres'—which resonates with our immortal soul—because our soul is entombed in this gross body which, through its senses, is not keen or refined enough to hear the divine music.  
 29. This philosophical exposition is impersonal and neither speaks of nor reflects any feelings of love he might have for Jessica. Such a discourse does not compare in sentiment to the single line: 'If music be the food of love, play on.'  
 30. Diana is the goddess of the moon. Lorenzo is asking the musicians to play so as to coax out Diana (the moon) and have her come out from behind a cloud.  
 31. An additional line could be added to clarify the reference to Diana, as goddess of the moon: <And let her shining face alight the sky> / <Let her illumine the sky with her face.>  
 32. **touches**: / strains / chords > notes played by the fingers touching, or plucking, a string  
 33. **mistress ear**: Q1 does not use an apostrophe to imply the possessive form (i.e., mistress's) since it is understood to be possessive, and since the extra syllable would corrupt the meter.  
 34. **sweet**: soft, gentle, pleasing, soothing, melodious, etc.  
 35. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.69]  
 36. Jessica says that she is never merry when hearing sweet music, which suggests that even the most sublime and beautiful exterior circumstances cannot bring joy to Jessica, whose mind is besieged with turmoil. We might interpret her use of the term *never* however, to mean 'lately,' thus indicating that something is now disturbing her, so much so, that even sweet music cannot allay it. Similar to the mix-matched response that Antonio receives in regard to his inner sadness (*Your mind is tossing on the ocean*) Jessica receives the same kind of reply from Lorenzo: (*For do but note a wild and wanton herd / Or race of youthful and unhandled colts / Fetching mad bounds*). Lorenzo's winded exposition is lost on Jessica—neither music nor Lorenzo's reply about the calming effect of music, has any calming or joyful effect on her.

—Lorenzo

The reason is your mind is too engrossed<sup>37</sup> / distracted  
⟨With all your<sup>o</sup> thoughts and it cannot enjoy / every  
The peace and beauty that<sup>o</sup> embraces you.<sup>38</sup>⟩<sup>39</sup> / The wonderment that now  
⟨All you need do is listen with your heart.⟩

---

[Lines from the previous dialogue have been deleted]<sup>40</sup>

*Enter Portia and Nerissa, approaching*

---

37. {The reason is, your spirits are attentive}

38. / cannot delight | In all the beauty that embraces you.

39. {The reason is your spirits are attentive}

/ The reason is you're too concerned with<sup>o</sup> every / involved with / engrossed in  
Thought and emotion. Sweet, just let them be;

**spirits:** mindstuff, awareness, consciousness; the senses, faculties of perception, the mind and its thoughts/emotions. Hence, Lorenzo is saying that Jessica is too pre-occupied with her own thoughts and state of mind to enjoy and appreciate the beauty around her. Her spirit (awareness, attention) too focused upon, occupied by (attentive to) her thoughts, concerns, troubles, etc.

40. The whole of Lorenzo's discourse is filled with discordant and accusative images—ironic when speaking about the beauty of music, and far less harmonious than his prior words. After Jessica's statement that she is never merry when she hears sweet music, Lorenzo does not inquire as to the reason why she feels this way, nor does he try to comfort her, but continues with his philosophical waxing. In response to Lorenzo, we hear no reply from Jessica, nor do we ever hear her speak again (except as part of a group command given by Portia [119-121]). Thus, the last entry regarding Lorenzo and Jessica remains one of stark division, with Jessica's last words being: *I am never merry when I hear sweet music*. We see that Shylock's last line in the original is equally as feeble [*I pray you, give me leave to go from hence; | I am not well. Send the deed after me, | And I will sign it.*].

In deference to brevity and aesthetics, the whole of Lorenzo's passage (or major portions thereof) could be deleted. The close of the scene between the two lovers might have an ominous sense if it simply ends with Jessica's last line, *I am never merry when I hear sweet music* [69]. In this rectification, the dialogue is made to end on a softer tone with four, somewhat appealing, lines offered by Lorenzo. The original text (of 18 lines) most of which are harsh, accusatory, and ill-rubbing have been deleted from this version. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.71, for Lorenzo's full discourse].

—Portia [*looking toward the house*]  
 That light we see is burning in my hall—  
 How far that little candle throws its beams! {his}  
 So shines a good deed in a wicked<sup>o</sup> world. {naughty} / darkened

—Nerissa  
 When the moon shone we did<sup>o</sup> not see the candle. / could

—Portia  
 So doth the greater glory dim the lesser.<sup>o</sup> {less}  
 A substitute shines brightly as a king  
 Until the king arrives<sup>o</sup> and then his status<sup>o</sup> {be by} / returns // {state} / rank  
 Empties itself, as doth an inland brook,  
 Into the vaster ocean.<sup>o</sup> Music. Listen!<sup>o</sup> {main of waters} {hark}

*Music plays.*

—Nerissa  
 It is your music, madam, from the house.

—Portia  
 Nothing is good without the proper setting.<sup>o</sup> 41 / right context  
 Methinks it sounds much sweeter with the night.<sup>o</sup> {than by day}

—Nerissa  
 Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

—Portia  
 The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark,  
 When neither one is heard;<sup>o</sup> and yet, I think, {is attended}  
 The nightingale, if she should sing by day—  
 When every goose is cackling—<sup>o</sup> would be thought {honking} / bird is crowing  
 No better a musician than the wren.  
 How many things, by proper setting,<sup>o</sup> come<sup>o</sup> 42 {season} / rise

---

41. {Nothing is good, I see, without respect}

**respect:** a) context, b) appreciation, c) the support of a beneficial context, surrounding, mood, etc.

Portia is saying: Things are made good by the proper context; one can appreciate the goodness of a things when they are set in the right context. Hence, the music sounds better in the context of night (which is still) as opposed to day (which is filled with noise and activity). [See Additional Note, 5.1.99]

42. {How many things by season seasoned are}

/ How many things by season are delivered<sup>o</sup> / inspired / uplifted



Have<sup>o</sup> they returned?

{Are}

—Lorenzo                      Madam, they are not yet.  
But there has come a messenger before  
To signify their coming.<sup>o</sup>

/ To tell of their arrival

—Portia                      Go, Nerissa,  
Give order to my servants that they take<sup>o</sup>  
No note at all<sup>o</sup> of our being absent hence,<sup>o</sup> 48  
Nor you Lorenzo—Jessica, nor you.

/ speak

/ Neither a word // our recent absence

*A tucket sounds* 49

—Lorenzo  
Your husband is at hand, I hear his trumpet.  
We are no tell-tales, madam, fear you not.<sup>o</sup>50

/ We shall not say a thing, madam, fear not

*The cloud passes and the moon shines again*

—Portia  
This night methinks is but the daylight sick.<sup>o</sup>  
It looks a little paler, like a day  
That finds the sun concealèd<sup>o</sup> by a cloud.<sup>51</sup> 52

/ a sickly day

/ finds the sunlight hidden

*Enter Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano, and their followers*

—Bassanio [*overhearing Portia*]

We should hold day with all the cavern-dwellers,<sup>o</sup>  
If you would walk in absence of the sun.<sup>54</sup>

{Antipodes}<sup>53</sup> / Those who live in China

---

48. {Give order to my servants that they take | No note at all of our being absent hence }

49. A tucket is a distinctive ‘signature tune’ played on a trumpet to announce the arrival of those of high or royal standing. The tucket we hear is to signify the arrival of Bassanio. It is not likely that any of the parties have yet heard this tucket but, by inference, and by knowing of Bassanio’s immanent arrival, they surmise that it is Bassanio’s tucket.

50. {We are no tell-tales, madam, fear you not }

51. {‘Tis a day | Such as the day is when the sun is hid}.

52. After hearing Bassanio’s tucket the only words Portia states—which serve as *her* announcement of him—is a reference to the night, which looks like *daylight sick*, as pale as a day *when the sun is hid*. Perhaps the metaphor is in reference to herself, as the sun, and to her own shining, which (upon her new master’s return) will be obscured, like a dull cloud obscuring the sun. (In the next line, Bassanio unwittingly extends this analogy by likening Portia to the sun).

One could interpret Portia’s ‘talk about the weather’ in a more innocuous way: she abruptly changes the subject to talk about something banal, chit-chat as it were, as a way to hide her expectancy and appear somewhat coy and nonchalant about Bassanio’s immanent arrival. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.126]

53. {We should hold day with the Antipodes }

**Antipodes:** (lit. ‘opposite feet’); those who walk on the opposite side of the globe; those who walk in the day when we walk in the night, and vice versa.

The replacement of “Antipodes” with “cavern-dwellers” is not wholly accurate; this replacement was made because “Antipode” is not a readily-recognizable word.

54. {If you would walk in absence of the sun} / If you would walk when sunlight was not shining

**walk:** A metaphor for the sun’s apparent journey, or walk, through the sky, which brings about night and day. Herein Portia is likened to the brightness of the sun and her walking to the sun’s movement. Thus, she brings illumination, or daylight, even when the sun is absent (i.e. at night). Notice the complete opposite sentiment in Portia’s first comments about Bassanio—as *daylight sick*—and Bassanio comments about Portia, as the light-giving sun. ‘If you would always walk in the night, it would be day with us, as it now is on the other side of the globe.’ (Malone)

—Portia

Let me give light but let me not be light:<sup>56</sup>

For when a wife is light<sup>o</sup> in keeping vows

It maketh for<sup>o</sup> a heavy-hearted husband—<sup>o</sup> 57 58

And never shall Bassanio be for me.<sup>o</sup>

But God wills<sup>o</sup> all!<sup>o59</sup> You are welcome home, my lord. 60

/ Because a wife who's light . . . Doth

/ brings about / a husband's heavy-heart

/ my lord be so for me

{sort} > orders, ordains

—Bassanio

I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend.

This is the man, this is Antonio,

To whom I am so infinitely bound.

*Gratziano and Nerissa converse on their own*

—Portia

You should, in all sense,<sup>o</sup> be much bound to him<sup>61</sup>

/ good sense / reason

For, as I hear, he was much bound for you. 62

—Antonio

The bounds of which I'm well-acquitted of. 63

—Portia

Sir, you are very welcome to our house

/ We are most honored, sir, to have you here

Yet it must show<sup>o</sup> in other ways than words;

{It must appear}

Thus I'll make short of<sup>o</sup> this long-winded welcome.<sup>o</sup> 65

{Therefore I'll scant} {breathing courtesy}

---

56. **be light:** be unchaste; be unfaithful in the keeping of one's vows. *Light* in this context is in contrast to *heavy*. In terms of weight, *light* implies free, whereas *heavy* implies a physical weight, or a heavy chain, such as one that keeps a woman in place. *Light* (meaning a happy and carefree disposition) contrasted with *heavy* (i.e., sad and depressed). Here, *be light* refers to Portia being unfaithful which would cause Bassanio to be *heavy* (sad). The implication is that Bassanio should not do anything to make Portia light, unchaste.

57. / For when a wife is light in keeping vows | She makes herself a heavy-hearted husband.

58. {For a light wife doth make a heavy husband}

As previously noted, *light* and *heavy*, which usually refers to opposite measures of weight herein refers to human states—a *light* wife (unfaithful) and a *heavy* (husband) one's whose is burdened or weighed down with grief.

59. {But God sort all}

God works everything out according to His plan; God will work it all out, and put everything in order, and make things right. Portia is adding this *ex post facto* caveat—an escape clause—which commands the power to contradict her previous statement about her never making Bassanio a heavy husband—a husband who is sad over her being unfaithful to him. She is saying, 'I will never be unfaithful *but* . . .' Here she is setting the stage for the next confrontation, where she claims to have slept with the doctor in order to get back the ring that Bassanio gave away.

60. This is an impersonal and distant welcome. We notice that Portia never truly welcomes Bassanio nor does she even address him except when she is 'exclaiming on him' for having given away her ring. Her last words spoken to Bassanio are: *I had it of him. Pardon me, Bassanio, / For this ring the doctor lay with me.* [258-259]. Even when there is a perfect cue for her to speak—and respond to Bassanio's question [280] to confirm her loyalty, as Nerissa did to assure Gratziano—she says nothing.

61. {You should, in all sense, be much bound to him} / You should, in every sense, be bound to him

**in all sense:** in every sense, in every way, in all respects, with good reason

62. In Bassanio's previous line, *bound* is used to mean indebted. *Bound*, as used here can mean: a) bound in debt, b) bound in word or pledge, c) physically bound or imprisoned, or d) bound in friendship.

63. {No more than I am well acquitted of} / And from such bounds I have been fully freed

65. {Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy} / Thus, I need not waste breath on courtesies

/ Thus I'll skip over<sup>o</sup> this long-winded welcome

/ Thus I'll make short of / Therefore I'll spare you / Therefore I'll shorten

—Gratziano [*to Nerissa*]

By yonder moon I swear you do me wrong.<sup>66</sup>

In faith,<sup>o</sup> I gave it to the judge's clerk—

And I would have his manly parts cut off

Since you do take it, love, so much at heart.<sup>68</sup>

/ In truth

/ Since you, my love, take it so much to he

—Portia

A quarrel, ho, already! What about?<sup>o</sup>

{What's the matter?}

—Gratziano

About a hoop<sup>o</sup> of gold, a paltry<sup>o</sup> ring

That she did give me, whose lett'ring was,<sup>o</sup><sup>69</sup>

For all to see,<sup>o</sup> like cutler's poetry,

⟨The kind of words that one would find scribbled⟩

Upon a knife: 'Love me and leave me not.'<sup>70</sup>

/ band // petty

{posey} / motto

{for all the world} / by all accounts

—Nerissa

Why talk you of the wording<sup>o</sup> or the value?—

You swore to me when I gave it to you<sup>o</sup>

That you would wear it till your<sup>o</sup> hour of death,

And that it should<sup>o</sup> lie with you in your grave.

Though not for me,<sup>o</sup> yet for your vehement oaths,

You should have been more careful<sup>o</sup> and have keep it.

Gave to a judge's clerk?! No, God's my judge,<sup>o</sup>

That 'judge's clerk' will ne'er grow hair on *her* face!<sup>72</sup>

{poesy} / motto

/ I presented it

/ thy

/ would

> on my account

{been respective} / had more reverence

F1: {But well I know}

—Gratziano

He will, and if he live to be a man.

—Nerissa

Ay, if a woman live to be a man.

---

66. Gratziano swears by yonder moon, which is fickle and inconsistent, and which, at this point in the play, has been obscured by clouds.

68. {Would he were gelt that had it, for my part | Since you do take it love, so much to heart}

**gelt:** gelded or castrated; also a play on *gelt*, money.

/ Would he who has the ring have his endowment | Cut off, for all I care—since you, my love, | Are so upset over this little thing. // Would he who has the ring have but his manly | Portions lopped off, for all I care, since you, | My love, are taking this so much to heart. // Would he who has the ring be castrated | ⟨For all I care—and that is what I say,⟩ | Since you do take it, love, so much to heart.

69. / That she gave me, whose trite inscription was,

70. {For all the world like cutler's poetry | Upon a knife, 'Love me, and leave me not.'}

/ By all account, like a butcher's attempt | At poetry, with dull words that be scribbled | Upon a knife—'Love me and leave me not.'

/ By all accounts, like a knife-maker's poem— | Some posy scribbled upon a cheap knife | With the fine words: 'Love me, and leave me not.'

/ Naught but a cutler's try at poetry, | With fetching<sup>o</sup> words, as: 'Love me, don't leave me.' / sapless / tired

It was common for a trite motto to be inscribed on a knife blade and such a motto, or posy, was put on the blade by the cutler or knife-maker (not a poet). Gratziano is here trying to lessen the value of Nerissa's ring by saying its inscription was trite and written with the same skill as that of a knife-maker—with a cliché inscriptions one would find on his knife. The irony is that Gratziano, whose words are often crude and unpoetic, is now placing some kind of value on poetry.

72. {Gave it a judge's clerk! No, God's my judge, | The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it}

—Gratziano

Now, by this hand,<sup>o</sup> I gave it to a youth,  
A kind of boy, a little scrubbèd boy,<sup>o</sup>  
No higher<sup>o</sup> than thyself, the judge's clerk,  
A prating boy, who begged it as a fee.  
I could not, for my heart, deny it him.

/ by my word / do I swear  
/ scrub-brushed little boy  
/ taller  
  
/ hold him from it / stay his request

—Portia

I must be plain<sup>o</sup> with you: you are to blame,<sup>73</sup>  
To part so slightly<sup>o</sup> with your wife's first gift—  
A thing placed<sup>o</sup> on with oaths upon your finger,  
And so riveted, with faith, unto your flesh.  
I gave my love a ring and made him swear  
Never to part with it—and here he stands.  
I dare be sworn for him, he would not leave it,  
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth  
That all the world could muster. Gratziano,<sup>o</sup><sup>74</sup>  
You give your wife too unkind a cause for grief.<sup>75</sup>  
An 'twere to me,<sup>o</sup> I would be fuming mad.<sup>76</sup>

/ frank  
/ eas'ly / lightly  
{stuck}  
  
/ could give. Now Gratziano  
  
/ If it were me

—Bassanio [*aside*]

Why, I were best to sunder<sup>o</sup> my left hand,<sup>o</sup>  
And swear I lost the ring defending it.

/ cut off {cut my left hand off}

—Gratziano

My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away<sup>77</sup>  
Unto the judge who begged it, and indeed  
Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk<sup>78</sup>  
Who<sup>o</sup> took some pains in writing, he begged mine—  
And neither man nor master would take aught<sup>o</sup><sup>79</sup>  
But the two rings.

{That}

—Portia           What ring gave you, my lord?  
Not that, I hope, which you received from me.

—Bassanio

If I could add a lie unto a fault,  
I would deny it, but you see my finger

---

73. {You were to blame, I must be plain with you}

74. {That the world masters. Now in faith, Gratziano}

75. / Your callous act does bring your wife much grief / Your blund'ring act is cause for all her grief.

76. {And 'twere to me I should be mad at it}

**'twere to me:** if it were up to me (to react in the same situation); if this were done to me

/ Had you done this to me, I'd be fuming / And were it me, I would be fuming mad. / If this were done to me I'd be incensed (/indignant / outraged) / If you did this to me, I'd be incensed

77. / Yet your man, too, did give away his ring

78. / Who was deserving of it; then his clerk,

79. / And man nor master would take nothing else

Hath not the ring upon it. It is gone.

—Portia

Even so void is your false heart of truth.<sup>80</sup>

By heaven, I will ne'er come to° your bed<sup>81</sup> {in}

Until I see the ring!<sup>82</sup>

—Nerissa                      Nor I in yours

Till I again see mine.

—Bassanio                      Sweet Portia,<sup>83</sup>

If you did know to whom I gave the ring,

If you did know for whom I gave the ring,

And would realize° for what I gave the ring, {conceive} // And think upon

And how unwillingly I left the ring,

When naught would be accepted but the ring,<sup>84</sup>

You would abate° the strength of your displeasure. / appease // brunt

—Portia

If you had known the virtue° of the ring, / value

Or half her worthiness who gave the ring,

Or your own honour to keep safe° the ring, {contain}

You would not then have parted with the ring—

And it appears, you were not even pleased° / willing / bent / °clined / prompted

To defend it with any kind° of zeal. {terms} / show

What man is there so deficient in reason,° {so much unreasonable}

So wont of modesty, as to demand° / so as to urge

---

80. / And ever gone is the truth from your heart / And e'er so void of all truth is your false heart / And so your heart, too, is bereft of truth

81. / By heaven, I swear, I'll ne'er lay° with you / bed / sleep

82. /And gone from your false heart, is all semblance

Of truth! I swear, I'll ne'er come to your bed

Until I see the ring!

83. Most modern editions set the previous two lines in the standard iambic pentameter, which suggests no significant pause in the dialogue. Q1 sets the verse as four half lines (6-4-6-4 syllables) whereas F1 sets it with two half lines and one full line. (6-10-4 syllables). Q1 could be read with or without a pause in the dialogue, whereas the F1 setting demands two pauses:

Q1 Until I see the ring!

F1 Until I see the Ring.

Ner. Nor I in yours

Ner. Nor I in yours, til I again see mine.

Till I again see mine!

Bas. Sweet Portia,

Bass. Sweet Portia If you did know . . .

If you did know . . .

84. / When nothing would be had except the ring

A thing made sacred by a ceremony?<sup>85</sup>  
 ‹I hear the praises<sup>o</sup> of this worthy judge<sup>87</sup> / much praise  
 But now methinks<sup>o</sup> there is no judge at all!› / But seems the case  
 Nerissa, teaches me what to believe:<sup>o</sup><sup>88</sup> / the right idea  
 I'll bet my life some woman has<sup>o</sup> the ring.<sup>89</sup> {had} > was given

—Bassanio

No, by my honor, madam, by my soul,  
 No woman has<sup>o</sup> it, but a civil doctor<sup>o</sup> {had} > was given / lawyer  
 Who did refuse three thousand ducats from me,  
 And begged the ring, the which I did deny him,  
 And suffered him to go away displeas'd—  
 Even he who had saved<sup>o</sup> the very life {held up} / upheld  
 Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?  
 I was enforced to send it after him.  
 I was beset<sup>o</sup> with shame, and felt moreover<sup>91</sup> / besieged  
 To give the ring was the right thing to do.<sup>92</sup>  
 My honour would not let ingratitude  
 So much besmear it.<sup>93</sup> Pardon me, good lady,<sup>94</sup>  
 For by these blessed<sup>o</sup> candles of the night<sup>95</sup> / stars that stud the night  
 Had you been there I think you would have begged  
 The ring of<sup>o</sup> me to give the worthy doctor.<sup>96</sup> / from

85. {What man is there so unreasonable—  
 If you had pleased to have defended it / if you had any desire to defend it (hold onto it)  
 With any terms of zeal—wanted the modesty lacked the modesty  
 To urge the thing<sup>o</sup> held as a ceremony?} insist on having something > with but ceremonial value

What man is there so lacking in reason<sup>o</sup>— / bereft of all reason  
 Had you been pleased in so defending it<sup>o</sup> / If you had only desired (/wished) to defend it  
 With any kind of zeal—would so insist  
 On the thing with such sentimental value?

[See Additional Notes, 5.1.206]

87. / I keep on hearing praise of this good judge

88. {Nerissa teaches me what to believe:} / Nerissa, teaches me the right lesson:

89. {I'll die for't, but some woman had the ring!}

91. / I was o<sup>o</sup>ertaken by shame, feeling that

92. {I was beset with shame and courtesy}

/ I was o<sup>o</sup>ertaken by a deepened shame / I was beset with guilt and obligation / I was beset with disgrace and decorum / I was beset with feelings of disgrace | ‹And a deep sense that I should give the ring›

**shame:** a sense of dishonor, disgrace

**courtesy:** a sense of moral obligation, feeling that giving the ring was the right thing to do.

93. / And I could not let such ingratitude | Besmear my honor. Pardon me, good lady,

94. Giving away Portia's ring, at the request of Antonio, shows Bassanio's loyalty to Antonio above Portia. Moreover, it reveals Bassanio's weakness of character, and his inability to keep his own word or honor his own vows (which is consistent with his irresponsible and care-free character). He says he broke the vow to Portia to uphold his honor and show his gratitude, and because he was enforced—thus showing that he holds these self-concerned promptings greater than Portia and the vow he made to her. How is Portia to feel about such an act? What does it tell her about her new lord and master?

95. {For by these blessed candles of the night} / For by these stars, whose light doth bless the heavens

This oath—to the stars of the night sky—carries with it the same irony as Gratziano's swearing by yonder moon: both the light of the moon, and the stars (on this night) are inconsistent and covered up by the clouds. The stars, as well, are soon to fade as morning is swift approaching.

96. / That I give the ring to the worthy doctor.

—Portia

Let not that doctor e'er come near my house.  
Since he<sup>97</sup> hath got the jewel that I loved,<sup>o</sup> / that I do love  
And that<sup>o</sup> which you did swear to keep for me. / The one  
I will become as generous<sup>o</sup> as you.<sup>o</sup> {liberal} / giving, as were you  
I'll not deny him anything I have—<sup>o</sup> / hold back anything he desires  
No, not my body, nor my husband's<sup>o</sup> bed. / marital  
'Know'<sup>98</sup> him I shall, I am well<sup>o</sup> sure of it.<sup>o</sup> / quite // I shall in every way  
Lie not a night from<sup>o</sup> home. Watch me like Argus,<sup>99</sup> > away from  
<Who guarded Io with a hundred eyes.><sup>100</sup>  
If you do not, if I be left alone,  
Now, by mine honour, which is still<sup>o</sup> mine own,<sup>o</sup><sup>101</sup> {yet} // intact / unbroken  
I'll have the doctor<sup>o</sup> for my bedfellow.<sup>102</sup> / lawyer

—Nerissa

And I his clerk. Therefore, be well-advised / So take this as fair warning  
If<sup>o</sup> you do leave me to mine own protection. {How}

—Gratziano

Do as you will.<sup>o</sup> Let not me catch him, then, {Well, do you so}  
For if I do, I'll break<sup>o</sup> the young clerk's pen. {mar} / ruin

—Antonio

I am th'unhappy subject<sup>o</sup> of these quarrels. / the bitter // cause of this contention

—Portia

Sir, grieve not—none of this is caused by<sup>o</sup> you.<sup>103 104</sup> / brought by / over

—Bassanio

Portia, forgive me this enforcèd wrong;  
And in the witness<sup>o</sup> of these many friends<sup>105</sup> {hearing}  
I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,  
Wherein I see myself—

---

97. **he:** Portia now accepts Bassanio's statement that he gave the ring to a man, but here she shifts her game, saying that she, too, will give herself to this man.

98. **know him:** have sexual relations with him. Compare Portia's parting words to Bassanio in the previous scene [4.1.415]: 'I pray you, know me when we meet again.'

99. **Argus:** Argus Panoptes, the all-seeing, hundred-eyed giant who was set to guard Io, daughter of the river god, Inachus. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.622-77). Also compare the Indian myth of Malini, whose beauty was so great that Lord Shiva sprouted eyes on every side of his head so he could look at her even when she walked around him.

100. Lie not a night away from home. Like Argus, | <With all his hundred eyes, you watch o'er me.>

101. **by mine honor, which is yet mine own:**

a) by my chastity (virginity) which is still intact, still unbroken, still mine own (having not been taken by anyone as of yet). b) by my vows, which have not been broken. This is in contrast to Bassanio's honor which is not his own, as he has given it away when he broke his vow to keep the ring.

Portia's reference to honour, is a continuation of Bassanio's previous claim: *No, by my honour, madam, by my soul, | No woman had it, but a civil doctor.* [209])

102. / I'll share a bed with that worthy doctor.

103. / Sir, grieve not—you are not the cause of this.

104. {Sir, grieve not you, you are welcome notwithstanding} / Sir, grieve not you<sup>o</sup>—you're welcome nonetheless.

105. / And with these many friend as faithful<sup>o</sup> witness,



—Portia

Then you shall be his bondsman.<sup>o</sup> {surety}

*She takes the ring from her finger*

Give him this,

And bid him keep it better than the other.<sup>o</sup> 115 / first

—Antonio [*giving the ring to Bassanio*]

Here, Lord Bassanio—swear to keep this ring.

—Bassanio

By heaven it is<sup>o</sup> the same I gave the doctor! / 'tis

—Portia

I had it of him.<sup>o</sup> Pardon me, Bassanio,<sup>116</sup> / I got it from him

But for this ring the doctor lay with me.<sup>o</sup> 117 / I lay with the young doctor.

—Nerissa

And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano,

For that same scrubbèd boy, the doctor's clerk,

In lieu of<sup>o</sup> this [*showing her ring*] last night did lie with me. / In 'change for / In hock for

—Gratiano

Why this is like the mending of highways

In summer, when no such repair is needed—<sup>118</sup>

---

115. Here Portia is testing Bassanio, and outwitting him—and 'playing him like a fiddle.' As with Shylock, she plays from the position of advantage, of being 'one up,' i.e., knowing the outcome before she even begins. Here (as in the trial scene) she escalates the confrontation: First she accuses Bassanio of giving the ring to a woman; then she accepts that he gave the ring to a man (the doctor); then she says that she will be as liberal (and giving of herself) to the doctor as was Bassanio (because *he hath got the jewel that I loved*); and finally (in the next passage) she says that she already gave herself to the doctor—a tormenting lie that must have made Bassanio's heart sink. The significant outcome of her orchestration is in securing Antonio as surety for Bassanio's vow to her. (Remember that he broke his vow to her in favor of Antonio's request). Now, with Antonio as his bondsman, Bassanio cannot break his vow to Portia over anything involving Antonio. Further, this could be seen as a kind of second wedding, where Antonio is symbolically giving away Bassanio, as a father might give away a dear son to his new bride. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.255]

116. {I had it of him. Pardon Bassanio}

Portia is echoing Bassanio and using his words against him. In 247-48 Bassanio asks for Portia's pardon in regards to his giving away the ring, saying: *Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear | I never more will break an oath with thee*. Here she uses the same plea and asks him to *pardon* her for laying with the doctor (in order to get back the ring that he gave away). It seems that Portia assigns a similar value to Bassanio's vow (to keep the ring) as she does to her own vow of chastity.

117. / But for this ring, I made love with the doctor

Portia telling Bassanio that she 'lay' with the doctor is a somewhat brutal claim—and perhaps, in her mind, deservedly so. This is mitigated by the fact that she only lets him squirm for a few seconds.

118. {Why this is like the mending of highways | In summer where the ways are fair enough}

/ In summer, when the roads need no such fixing

The insinuation with this metaphor—comparing Nerissa to a road—is that the road is being (or has been) dug up and is therefore ruined in the sense that it cannot be traveled upon. Nerissa has been ruined by her sleeping with the clerk and now Gratiano cannot travel upon that road (because it is unfit for use).

⟨Which makes the road all rough and ruined° for use.⟩<sup>119 120</sup> / spoiled  
You have cheated us,° ere we have deserved it!<sup>121</sup> {What, we are cuckolds}

—Portia

Speak not so grossly.° There is much confusion.<sup>122</sup> / crudely  
⟨We were with you in Venice the whole time;  
There never was a doctor nor his clerk.⟩<sup>123</sup>  
Thus you shall find that I was the doctor,  
Nerissa there my clerk. Lorenzo here  
Shall witness, I set forth as soon as you  
And have just° now returned. I have not yet / even  
Entered my house. [⟨And here is a letter  
Explaining it all.⟩]<sup>124</sup> Antonio, for you  
I have much better news than you expect. [*takes out a letter*]  
Unseal this letter soon. There you shall find,  
That suddenly, three of your argosies  
Have come to port, their° hulls replete with° riches.<sup>125 126</sup> / with / amassed / abound with  
You'd not° believe by what strange accident° / the circumstance by which<sup>127</sup>  
I chanced upon this letter°<sup>128</sup> {I chanced on}

—Antonio [*reading the letter*] I am speechless!° {dumb}

—Bassanio [*to Portia*]

Were you the doctor and I knew you not?<sup>129</sup>

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119./ And thus, the highway is not fit for use / Which makes the highway ruined for good use / And it but the highway for use / And, in the meantime, are ruined for use / And they're then ruined for fair travel and use

120. The following two lines, which could be added, help clarify Gratziano's previous metaphor:

⟨Why the best fruit has been given away | Before we even had the chance to eat it!⟩

121. {What, we are cuckolds ere we have deserved it?} / We are betrayed before our wedding night! / Why we got shafted 'fore our wedding night!

/ The fruit's gone rancid before we could eat it! / The fruit's been plucked and no longer worth eating.

122. {Speak not so grossly. You are all amazed}

123. These two lines replace the following lines found in the original [268-69]:

{Here is a letter. Read it at your leisure. | It comes from Padua, from Bellario.} The line, 'And here is a letter which explains it all' is emended to Portia's speech a few lines later. This would then indicate that Portia wrote the letter, not Bellario. There seems to be no reason as to why (or when, or for whom, or for what purpose) Bellario would have written such a letter—and no reason as to why Portia would need to produce it. Portia's simple telling of the story, and how she was the doctor, would clear up all doubt; she needn't produce, or go to the trouble of writing a letter to explain it all. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.267]

124. As mentioned in the previous note, the production of any explanatory letter, by Portia, is not needed. To preserve the triplicate delivery of letters, however, this delivery could be included. If one prefers a more likely scenario—where Portia simply explains everything in person, rather than deliver a letter—then this line could be replaced with the following: ⟨And soon I will explain | The whole thing to you⟩.

125. { . . . Unseal this letter soon. | There you shall find three of your argosies | Are richly come to harbor suddenly. }

126. Portia coming upon the news of Antonio's argosies coming to port before Antonio stands out as an anomaly. She must have come upon this news while on the road from Venice to Belmont. [See Additional Notes, 5.1.277]

127. {You shall not know by what strange accident} / You shall not know by what coincidence

**you shall not know:** you would not believe, you'd never guess

**strange accident:** coincidence, unlikely circumstance

128. Replace last three lines with two:

/Have richly come to port. You shall not know° / you'd never guess

How strange it was I chanced upon this letter.

129. Portia never answers this question. When Gratziano asks the same question of Nerissa, she immediately reassures him with a positive response.



—Portia [*looking at the sky*] It is almost morning,<sup>137</sup>  
 And yet I am sure you are not satisfied  
 With an account so brief.<sup>o</sup> 138 Let us go in / scarce  
 And charge<sup>o</sup> us there with cross-examination,<sup>o</sup> 139 / probe {upon inter'gatories}  
 And we will answer all things faithfully.<sup>o</sup> / truthfully

—Gratziano  
 Let it be so. The first line of questioning<sup>o</sup> {the first inter'gatories}  
 That my Nerissa shall be sworn on is:  
 Whether she prefers on the next night to lay  
 Or go to bed now, with two hours till day?<sup>140</sup>  
 But were the day come, I should wish it night  
 Till I were couching<sup>o</sup> in my clerk's delight.<sup>141</sup> / laying / rolling  
 And while I live, I'll fear no other thing—  
 So sore as keeping safe<sup>o</sup> Nerissa's ring.<sup>142</sup> / But the sore keeping of

*Exeunt, Couples first, then Antonio*

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137. It is almost morning. The fairy tale is about to end. No sunset—nothing but a gloomy sunrise. Here, also, the roles of prince and princess are reversed: the prince is now shown to be anything but a prince; and the princess, showing her strong, independent spirit, and superiority over her lord, is hardly a princess in need of rescue. The couples do not ride off into the sunset, to a future of everlasting peace and bliss; they enter into the morning, with the pairs somewhat distant and estranged, and with Antonio as the odd man out.

138. {With these events at full}

139. / So you can probe us with all your questions / And charge us there with your cross-examining

140. {Whether till the next night she had rather stay

{Or go to bed now, being two hours to day

141. {But were the day come, I should wish it night

{Till I were couching with the doctor's clerk

142. This bawdy punning is commonly found at the end of a romantic comedies. Herein the term *ring* is usually taken as a reference to 'vulva' and Gratziano's 'sore keeping' of it—well we need not comment on that!

ACT SIX - Scene One

*Venice, in front of Shylock's House.*

*Enter Shylock and Tubal, then Messenger from opposite direction*

—Tubal

We still have time for another trade.

—Shylock

Yes, one more trade. [*To Messenger*] How now, what news?

—Messenger

I bring a letter from your daughter.

—Shylock

From Jessica? From my daughter?

*Messenger hands Shylock the letter and exits.*

*He tries to open it but his hands are too shaky. He hands it to Tubal, who opens the letter and glances over it.*

—Tubal [*glancing at letter*]

She'll be in Venice, soon, and wants to see you.

It is good news my friend, 'tis all good news.<sup>1</sup>

*Tubal lifts up Shylock's turquoise ring and returns it to him with the letter*

—Shylock [*holding the ring, glancing off*]

When comes the end our treasures turn to dust

Our fortunes give but e'er take as they must;

*/ take away they must*

My life, my deeds, and my ducats suffice,

*/ are lost*

I've gained a fortune at so high a price.<sup>o</sup>

*/ some comfort at too high a price*

And now my friend, I must bid you good-bye,

'Tis not slightly to see<sup>o</sup> 'ol Shylock<sup>o</sup> cry.

*/ a sight to see // an old man/*

*Tubal exits*

*Shylock sits alone with ring and letter in hand*

END

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1. Optional lines could be added here:

Surely, methinks, before ol' Shylock dies,

He'll find a smile in his daughter's eyes.

